

FROM CONFLICT TO UNITY: MOTIVATION AND PRACTICAL REASON

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In my dissertation I explore the connection between intentional action and practical normativity from the perspective of motivation. I assume that an adequate theory of action motivation should embrace the normative commitment that to explain intentional action is to reveal it to be subject to practical norms. In the first chapter I argue that these are not the norms of so-called instrumental rationality. Against most theories of practical reason I argue that there is no irreducible, action-guiding requirement of practical rationality to take the means to one's ends. The normativity of means-end thought is not a type of practical rationality that guides action, but is internal to the elementary structure of intentional action itself. In the second chapter I argue against monolithic theories on which the relevant norms are the norms of non-instrumental practical rationality which are constituted as such by a single requirement: the requirement to approximate or satisfy an agent-general desire, to act in accordance with one's judgment about one's reasons, or to engage in a single type of practical reasoning. To allow for the possibility of primary motivational conflict, conflict between contrary motivations towards one and the same action at the same time, we have to assume a multi-dimensional theory which posits incommensurable practical requirements at the source of practical norms. In the final chapter I argue that we should explain choice in the face of conflict between these incommensurable requirements in terms of these very requirements alone. Against contemporary versions of Humeanism, Scholasticism and Kantianism I argue that we should not appeal to the existence of a *separate* purely executive or a *more* rational capacity for choice to explain how incommensurable practical requirements issue in unified intentional action. Instead, I propose, we should accept that these incommensurable requirements issue in unified intentional action because they constitute potential determinations of practical knowledge: knowledge of oneself as determined in one's reasoning about what to do by the right requirement for the circumstances. Intentional action is what meets the requirements of practical rationality, I show, as long as we take these requirements to be both incommensurable and cognitive.

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Preface

It follows that the standard of reasonable conduct that the philosophy of the practical derives from lived experience must attend to each value in its separateness and irreducibility to others. It must specify more and more closely what claims (including moral claims) each value makes on thought, feeling, and appetite. The philosopher of practice must render it as un-mysterious as he can how the knowledge of such a standard is not exhausted by the verbalized generalizations or precepts of either agent or theorist. (D. Wiggins, *Incommensurability: Four Proposals*, p. 65)

I came to Pittsburgh to work on Wittgenstein. But once I actually made it here I got mesmerized by the philosophy of action. I started working on this dissertation hoping that I would be able to follow David Wiggins' admonition about what the philosopher of practice should do. In the process I felt the need to first understand how one reaches the conclusion "that the standard of reasonable conduct that the philosophy of the practical derives from lived experience must attend to each value in its separateness and irreducibility to others."

What I hope to have done in this dissertation is explain what I now understand about the premises of this conclusion. I say "what I now understand" because I have had the great luck to be guided in this wild endeavor by a true Wittgensteinian, who mercilessly but kindly over the years kept showing to me that I *merely* thought I understood, where I thought I understood: Kieran Setiya; without whom not.

I know that dissertations have been written and are now being written without his help, but I do not think I will ever understand how.

But I also hope that in this dissertation I managed to say "nothing new." For, I have also had the unbelievable luck to have been taught by John McDowell, who patiently and uncompromisingly over the years kept pointing out to me that what I was arguing against I was also infested with. Without him I would have forgotten that it is the appearances we are here to save and not the reputations.

This notwithstanding, what I hope to have done in this dissertation is to "speak my mind". For I have also had the great fortune to have been taught by Anil Gupta, who critically but encouragingly over the years kept pointing out to me that I cannot say a little bit of this and a little bit of that for fear of saying *one* false thing. Without him I would not have minded to mind my words.

Last, but not least, what I hope to have done in this dissertation is put my own spices in the mix. For I have also had the unbelievable luck to have been taught by Jessica Moss, who ironically but always warmly urged me to speak my heart's mind and not some constructed edifice of philosophical correctness, even if my spices were sometimes too hot. Without her I would have forgotten that we do not love X-style wisdom, but just wisdom.

I would have known less of myself without the guidance of these four people. And yet it was this very enterprise which would have been truly unbearable without the presence of my good friends. In a sense, finishing this dissertation is my excuse for writing this thank you note to the friends who have shown me so much over these long and painful years: First and foremost I want to thank James Pearson, who taught me that brilliance doesn't always shine, and who, with a fine sense of humor, reminded me in my darkest hours that "I'm a good philosopher even though most people think I'm a woman;" Hille Paakkunainen, who never failed to talk me out of my philosophical fanaticism with love and patience; Jamsheed Siyar who never let me forget that we do philosophy to do politics; Sasha Newton, who always kept me on the track of self-consciousness; Markos Valaris whose sharp and painful criticism always cleansed my thinking; Jesse O'Brien, whom I'm still trying to forgive for leaving Pittsburgh, for in doing so he took away from me an invaluable interlocutor; Kim Frost, who reminded me that philosophy doesn't need to be life-less even though some of the best philosophers are dead, and who generously added a bit of Australian English to my idiomatic Greek-American mix; Kyle Stevens, who relentlessly challenged my carelessness with words; Matthew Boyle, who could make me touch the softest note in me without ever sounding off; Lissa Meritt, who could actually explain Kant to me; Jochen Bojanowsky, who spent endless hours explaining to me American political philosophy; Ian Blecher whose work has been an exemplar of the delicacy of written philosophy; Greg Strom, whose good action theory gave me strength when I doubted all theory; and last but not least Karl Schafer whose philosophical acuteness and courage inspired my last years in Pittsburgh.

I wouldn't have made anything without the constant presence in my life of Elena Mamoulaki, Giouli Papadaki, Niki Maragkaki and Antonis Bikakis who have been my lifelong companions. Without them I'm not a whole person. Each has supported me and encouraged me in ways that defy enumeration. Last, but not least, I want to thank Dora Makri, Evaggelia Peraki, Kaiti Papari and Kostas Loukos. Without their support and friendship I would not have managed these last painful years of "finishing." I owe to them more than I can say.

I don't know how any-one manages this sort of life without such good friends.

Nevertheless I need to admit that all of my 1% of potential originality is stolen. In Steven Engstrom's lectures it was impressed upon me with great care that nothing bad can ever happen to reason itself. (This in effect is the inspiration of the fourth chapter.) Sometimes, after Michael Thompson's seminars I could literally *feel* my mind blowing up; thinking along with Michael about kinesis always felt like a kinesis of my understanding. (None of the first chapter would obviously have been possible without the guidance of Michael's thought.) In Sebastian Rodl's classes I could see it all hang together beautifully. Time and self-consciousness and I knew that I could never build something as attractive as what he did. I did try though. In my dream-like discussions with Jonathan Lear, I was taught that there is room even in the philosophy which looks to the ideal for the experience of loss and pain. I would never have the courage to schematize anything like the philosophical possibility of conflict, had it not been for his guidance and empathy. He could understand what it is like to come near a point where "nothing happens," and I had to start from there. And in my conversations with Aristides Baltas, my teacher in Athens, I could always feel that doing intellectual work is a matter of taking a political stance and not simply occupying an armchair.

The very best moments of this dissertation would, if only *per impossibile*, be blessed if they had managed to steal something from the ethos of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Plato's *Republic*, Kant's *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, and Anscombe's *Intention*.

I dreamed of this dissertation one night last summer while I was sitting in the ancient open-air theatre of Dionysus, below the Akropolis of Athens in Greece, and under the stars, listening to the symphony, looking over the lights of the city. I could see myself sitting there, struggling to understand why I kept failing to “be” in harmony, to “be” in balance, and I knew it, right there, right then, that that experienced “struggling” and not the wishful “being” was the point; that I had to read Plato more than I had read Aristotle, and think about partition more than I had thought about the good. I knew that I could not just “be” anything, either through luck or design. I could not just parachute myself in the land of the free. Each time I had to make a kinesis, from conflict to unity. Here it is my first such attempt.

To my family.

*

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INTRODUCTION

In my dissertation I explore the connection between intentional action and practical normativity from the perspective of motivation.¹ The main assumption of this work is the truth of what I shall be calling *the normativist commitment*: that to explain action motivation as such is to reveal it to conform or fail to conform to, or conform by approximation to, representations of practical norms; for short, to reveal it *to be subject* to representations of practical norms.² I argue that (1) practical norms are the norms of non-instrumental practical rationality, (2) that these norms ultimately trace back to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality, (3) that the *form* of action motivation (the way action motivation is determined by these incommensurable requirements) is the form of practical reasoning (the way practical reasoning is determined by these incommensurable requirements), and (4) that the form of practical reasoning and hence of action motivation is the form of practical self-consciousness; self-consciousness on the part of the agent as determined in her reasoning about what to do by the right practical requirement for the circumstances; such that when things go well it constitutes practical knowledge of oneself as rightly determining what to do in the circumstances.

¹ By “action motivation” I refer to that activation of the agent’s psychic structures or the agent’s most general concerns that makes intentional action intelligible in the way that intentional action is intentional. The exact nature of action motivation will depend on the details of particular theories I will examine in the main body of the dissertation.

² From now on I shall be calling theories that accept this commitment “normativist” and theories that reject it “anti-normativist.”

In the first part of this introduction I will motivate the normativist commitment by presenting the phenomenon of *akrasia* as a philosophical explanandum that anti-normativist accounts of action motivation fail to accommodate. In particular, I will argue, anti-normativist accounts fail to explain why akratic motivation incurs a distinctive sort of criticism, when compared to immoral motivation in general. In the second part of this introduction I will present a more detailed outline of the argument of this dissertation.

1.1 THE EXPLANATORY AIM OF A THEORY OF MOTIVATION

Thomas Nagel in *The Possibility of Altruism* criticizes an anti-normativist account of motivation on the grounds that it renders intelligible behavior that is not in fact intelligible.³ Leaving some of the interpretative issues and the details of Nagel's argument aside, we may extract from *The Possibility of Altruism*⁴ the following line of thought against anti-normativist accounts of the motivation to take the means to one's ends.

1. Pre-theoretically, it makes sense to divide behavior that aims at the realization of an end into intelligible and unintelligible behavior.
2. The aim of a theory of motivation is to explain what makes intelligible behavior intelligible and unintelligible behavior unintelligible.
3. To meet this aim, a theory should explain intelligible behavior as *behavior that is subject* to the normative standards of what counts as aiming at an end.
4. But, anti-normativist theories of motivation reject the very idea of the connection between the intelligibility of action and the appeal to norms.

³ See Nagel, 1970.

⁴ See especially Nagel, 1970, chapter VI.

5. Therefore, non-nativist theories of motivation are bound to fail to satisfy the explanatory aim laid out in (2).

The controversial claim that this reconstruction of Nagel's argument involves is the claim of premise (3): that if in explaining aim-oriented behavior we are not thereby revealing the agent as being subject to standards detailing how she *ought* to be, our explanations fail to do what they were supposed to do, because they fail to properly distinguish between intelligible and unintelligible behavior. But the anti-nativist about motivation will debate this interpretation of the general explanatory aim of a theory of motivation proposed in (2). As Kieran Setiya puts it when responding to a particular nativist account of motivation (on which motivation is constituted as such by the norms of ideal rationality), "There is pressure for one's dispositions, taken together, to be at least moderately good. But there is no reason to suppose that, in each instance, practical thought or the motivation of action must be "made intelligible by being revealed to be, or to approximate being, as [it] rationally ought to be" (McDowell 1985, p. 328), or that a special kind of explanation is involved."⁵ To use Nagel's well known example,⁶ if an agent is disposed to put a dime in a pencil sharpener when she wants to have a drink, and has the causally efficacious belief that she is putting the dime in the pencil sharpener because she wants a drink, then, Setiya insists, this suffices to explain her act of putting a dime in a pencil sharpener as an action qualifying for reasons explanation.

Exercises of the power of motivation should, on this view, be explained as the activation of dispositions to perform certain actions, when certain conditions hold.⁷ If the relevant dispositions

⁵ Setiya, 2007a, p. 66.

⁶ See Nagel, 1970, p. 33-34.

⁷ For instance, on Setiya's account these conditions are conditions of causally efficacious self-knowledge. See especially Setiya, 2007a, p. 39-56. But the details of his picture don't matter for my purposes here.

are there to be activated *and* these conditions hold, then even such *bizarre* actions as putting dimes in pencil sharpeners to get cokes may be perfectly intelligible as actions done for reasons. Distinguishing the reasonable from the not-so reasonable exercises of the power of motivation is the separate task of evaluating the character of these dispositions by standards external to the power of motivation itself. In short, a first stab at getting at the anti-normativist claim is to say that there are no standards *internal* to the power of motivation itself on which to judge that a certain behavior counts as an *intelligible* instance of an action done for reasons. In other words, there are no standards inherent to motivation on which to judge that a certain motivation is as it *ought to be*. This type of “ought” is, on the non-normativist account, nothing but a chimera.

1.2 THE ANTI-NORMATIVIST COMMITMENT

At this point, it may seem that the choice between a normativist and an anti-normativist account of motivation is a matter of sensibility. Are we prone to think of action explanation as an irreducible type of explanation, in which “we are identifying the phenomena to be explained and the phenomena that do the explaining, as directly answering to our own norms?”⁸ Or do we tend to conceive of action explanation as part of our comprehensive theory of the world which purports to explain things by “subsuming particular cases under what generally tends to happen?”⁹

But this is not merely a matter of sensibility; at least not entirely. I believe that there is further reason to resist a theory of motivation on which the criteria of intelligibility do not

⁸ See Davidson, 2004, p. 115.

⁹ McDowell, 1998, p. 331.

identify the explanandum by reference to whether it is subject to distinctive norms; by reference, that is, to internal normative standards. We should resist anti-normativist accounts of motivation at the start because they revise our pre-theoretic understanding of what the explananda of a theory of motivation are. This comes out in the way such accounts deal with a distinctive kind of motivational conflict: instances of *akratic* motivation.

As I already said, on a view like Setiya's, action explanation is adequate if it can reveal action as the activation of non-normatively understood dispositions; if it can reveal action to be a case of the general pattern of what tends to happen. Now, this pattern may be criticized on external grounds. It may turn out that some such pattern fails to meet the *external* standards of what counts as a *good* motivational pattern. The action, which is revealed as falling under that specific pattern, can in turn be criticized as not meeting the standards of good motivational patterns. On Setiya's view, these external standards are the standards of virtue, the standards of ethically excellent motivational patterns.¹⁰ Good motivational patterns, then, are determined as such on the basis of what counts as virtuous motivational patterns. At least in principle, there is no restriction on the origin of the standards by which to judge the quality of these dispositions. It might turn out that motivational patterns count as good if they tend to make the agent happy; or most agents happy, etc.

But I want to suggest now that no external criterion of goodness will properly differentiate between two ways in which our motivational patterns might (pre-theoretically at least) incur criticism. I will call them *the way of the akratic agent* and *the way of the vicious agent* for short, although by the latter I will basically refer to any case of non-*akratic* moral or rational failing.

¹⁰ See Setiya, 2007a, part two.

The rough difference, I shall urge, is that *akratic* moral failing is further criticizable from a perspective internal to action motivation.¹¹ Anti-normativist accounts, I will argue, deny the possibility of any *distinctively motivational* failing or defect, and hence of *akratic* motivation.

Denying the possibility of *any* distinctively motivational failing or defect should not be conflated with the weaker suggestion that no one *specific* type of motivation is necessarily defective by a single standard. As Nomy Arpaly quite attractively argues, acting against one's best judgment is not sufficient to guarantee that one *thereby* acts defectively in this sense.¹² If we are convinced by Arpaly, it follows that motivation which goes against one's best judgment is not *inherently* defective. For there are cases in which by acting against one's best judgment, one does the thing one has most reason to do, as when one drops a secure but draining career in law school to follow one's dream to become a singer. Dreamy motivation is not inherently defective even if it may at times go against our best judgments; in fact, sometimes at least, not even *when* it goes against our best judgments. For sometimes our best judgment is inculcated with guilt, repression of feelings, etc, which may actually render an agent's choices in accordance with it unreasonable.

This much may be true. But it does not follow from this that the *conflict* between being motivated against one's best judgment *and* being motivated in accordance with one's best

¹¹ For my purposes here I shall suppose that akratic failing is always a moral failing, which is controversial, but I don't think that much rests on this assumption. The claim I am interested in is the claim that there is at least one perspective from which akratic motivation is criticizable and vicious motivation isn't. And this is a meaningful claim independently of whether we also assume that there is a *common* perspective from which both failings are criticizable. (For a view on which weakness of will is mere irresoluteness in the pursuit of any end, and so is not necessarily criticizable from a moral perspective, see Holton, 1999.) In what follows, I will understand by "vicious motivation" the motivation which goes against the externally determined standards of good practical thought (e.g. virtue in Setiya's case) and I will claim that akratic motivation incurs a further type of criticism. Whether or not it also involves a common criticism is not important for my purposes.

¹² See Arpaly, 2000.

judgment cannot be an instance of a distinctively motivational defect, or failing. And even if this is granted, it still does not follow that the idea of a distinctively motivational defect or failing is incoherent. In other words, even if we dispel the attraction of the thought that there is only *one* standard of motivational success (such as following one's best judgment for instance) such that *any one* motivation which does not meet this standard counts as inherently defective, we do not thereby show that no case of motivational conflict should be characterized as *motivationally* defective.

We are now in a position to say that the radical anti-normativist commitment is that *no type* of distinctively motivational defect or failing is possible. In other words, *no* motivational situation (e.g. conflict) can count as defective from a perspective internal to the power of motivation itself. If this is true, there will be no way to *distinguish* between *akratic* motivation and morally defective motivation (in general).

The argument I propose can be put in the following way:

1. All intelligible behavior can be divided into behavior that incurs criticism and behavior that does not.
2. There is a pre-theoretic distinction between two different ways in which intelligible behavior may incur criticism: the way of the *akratic* motivation and the way of the immoral motivation (in general).
3. Anti-normativist theories fail to explain the distinction in (2).
4. We ought to reject non-normativist theories in favor of normativist theories.

1.3 THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN *AKRATIC* AND VICIOUS MOTIVATION

Premise (2) above is supported by the pre-theoretic intuition that while vicious and *akratic* motivation both issue in action against the good (and, hence, must be the result of motivation against the good, assuming the agents are free), the agents in each case do not count as acting against the good in the same way. Intuitively, the reason is that the good is not available for both in the same way. For the motivation of the vicious agent the good is available only as that which is to be avoided (whether in a direct or oblique cognition), whereas for the motivation of the *akratic* agent, the good is available as that which is *both* to be pursued and avoided (where the cognition of the good as to be pursued is not oblique).

Consider some typical examples of *akrasia*, and think about how we describe the motivation of an *akratic* agent. One is *both* thinking that the Surgeon General warns that smoking kills, and dying to enjoy smoking, *as* one takes the cigarette out of the packet, lights it up and exhales the smoke. One is *both* thinking that betraying a friend is really a terrible thing to do, and dying to enjoy intense sexual intercourse, *as* one takes off one's clothes, walks towards the bed and starts kissing a friend's beloved partner. One is both thinking that having a heavy meal right before going to bed is bad for one's health, and dying to enjoy the taste of melted cheese on bacon, *as* one gets out of bed, goes to the fridge and puts the bacon in the microwave.

Now consider how we would describe these same actions if we thought they issued from vicious motivation. We might very well say the following: that as the agent takes the cigarette out of the packet, lights it up and exhales the smoke, she does not care about her own life; that as she takes off her clothes, walks towards the bed and starts kissing her friend's beloved partner,

she does not care about her friend; and finally, that as she gets out of bed, goes to the fridge and puts the bacon in the microwave, she does not care about her health. In contrast, we say of the *akratic* agent that she cares for her life but does not keep herself from smoking; that she cares for her friend but does not keep herself from having sex with her friend's beloved partner; that she cares for her health but does not keep herself from having a heavy meal right before bed.

Intuitively, even though both cases incur a common criticism, the *akratic* motivation seems to incur a *further* criticism. The common criticism might be expressed interrogatively as follows: "Why did you want to smoke this cigarette?," "Why did you want to have sex with your friend's beloved partner?," "Why did you want to eat this heavy meal right before going to bed?" The further criticism that the *akratic* motivation incurs might be expressed interrogatively in the questions "Why did you want to smoke a cigarette/have sex with your friend's beloved partner/eat this heavy meal right before going to bed, *if you care about your life/friends/health?*" It seems, then, that at least pre-theoretically we think that there is a distinctive criticism that *akratic* motivation incurs. Intuitively, what we find fault with is not just the appeal of the bad, or not caring for the good, but the appeal of the bad *given* that one cares for the good.

But if we agree with the anti-normativist that the only standards by which intelligible behavior can be criticized are external to what constitutes it as intelligible behavior, we will not be in a position to distinguish between these two sorts of criticism to which action motivation may be subject.

The anti-normativist might attempt to make this distinction in the following way. She may suggest that both *akratic* and vicious motivations fail to meet the following criterion of what counts as a bad disposition of practical thought: not being moved towards A, when A is good.

Moreover, *akratic* motivation fails to satisfy the further, distinctive criterion of what counts as bad practical thought: not being moved towards A, when A is good and one believes that A is good. But this is not sufficient to mark the distinctive motivational defect of *akrasia*. For it needn't be the case that believing that A is good *must* have a motivational effect on the agent.¹³ Therefore the agent need not be in a motivational opposition of the *akratic* sort (where the good is available to one's motivation as both to be pursued and to be avoided), even though she may indeed believe that A is good while she is not being moved towards A.

But suppose the objector further refines the definition of *akratic* disposition as the disposition to *not* do A when *both* of the following conditions hold: one believes that A is good and one is disposed to do A when one believes that A is good. Now it may seem that *akrasia* would be a distinctively problematic disposition indeed, one that would dispose us to do not A when we are, *inter alia*, disposed to do A. On this picture, to not be disposed towards A, when A is good and one believes that A is good and one has the general disposition to do A when one believes that A is good, would be a distinctively bad (i.e. *akratically* bad) disposition of practical thought. In contrast, the vicious agent would appear to be an agent who acts in agreement with her dispositions, and thus her motivation would not be criticizable in this *further*, special sense.

But the sheer conflict of dispositions cannot be what is involved in akratic motivation pre-theoretically understood. For it is conceivable that conflict of dispositions might be in perfect agreement with an agent's beliefs, plans, desires, etc. Imagine the case of a determined self-hater (perhaps a woman who is from an early age inculcated with great guilt) who is committed to not

¹³ Of course there are theories on which this claim is false. But, no matter whether these theories are right or wrong, I believe that they are initially at least counter-intuitive. On any given occasion I may entertain the belief that dancing is good without actually being moved to do so, without anything being wrong with me.

acting on her own self-regarding dispositions. This person may have slowly, over the years and with a lot of practice, developed the disposition to not do A when she is disposed to do A, where A is any self-protecting act. Granted, her disposition may be distinctively criticizable from a perspective that is external to motivation as such. (It may, for instance, be one of the platitudes of our current ethical theory that good practical thought should involve self-protection when self-protection is not outweighed by other ethical considerations.) The fact is though that the disposition of the determined self-hater to act against her own dispositions is in perfect agreement with her plan to punish herself, or her belief that she ought to act against the self she hates, or even just the desire to express her self-hatred. Thus being in conflict with one's dispositions may itself be in perfect agreement with one's dispositions.

But if an anti-normativist account of motivation cannot appeal to the difference between conflicted and unconflicted dispositions to explain the distinction between *akratic* and vicious motivation, it will have to present both *akratic* and vicious motivation as *merely* criticizable from an external perspective. If for instance, this is the perspective of virtue, it may seem that *akrasia* is a distinctive moral failing, say a failing by the standards of the *moral* virtue of resoluteness. But this would not constitute a distinction between vicious and *akratic* motivation. In the best possible case, it would merely explain *akrasia* as a distinctive *form of* vicious motivation: motivation against the standards of the distinctive moral virtue of resoluteness in pursuit of an aim, in our case. But this would be to revise our pre-theoretic understanding of *akrasia* as a form of failing distinct *from* typical moral failing; and not distinct merely *as a case of* typical moral failing.

To sum up: by the lights of an anti-normativist conception of motivation, *akratic* motivation is perfectly non-problematic as an instance of action motivation; at most it incurs criticism only from an external perspective. If it incurs criticism only from an external perspective, it will merely constitute a species of vicious motivation. But to distinguish between the two kinds of criticism to which motivation might be subject we have to *assume* a normativist account of motivation. On such an account to explain action motivation as such is to reveal it to be subject to practical norms. Here is how a normativist account might explain the contrast between the criticism to which *akratic* and vicious motivation are subject. If in the case of *akrasia* the conflicting motivations are conceived of as subject to two incommensurable forms of practical normativity,¹⁴ then the object of each motivation will be criticizable from the standards which constitute the other motivation *as such*. It follows that the *akratic* motivation would count as being subject to standards internal to the perspective of action motivation.

Of course the above line of thought is not *conclusive* evidence for the truth of a normativist account. For one thing, it is too abstract to even qualify as a proper account.¹⁵ For another, the non-normativist could stubbornly refuse to even attempt to make sense of the distinctive criticism to which *akratic* motivation is subject. What this line of thought does manage to do, though, is to give us sufficient reason to seek an account of motivation which will make good on the following commitment:

Normativist commitment: to explain action motivation *as such* is to reveal it to be subject to standards internal to the perspective of motivation; the standards of practical norms.

¹⁴ What exactly the sense of incommensurability is will I hope become clear in the course of the argument.

¹⁵ I will have to say more about this account in the conclusion of this dissertation.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF THE ARGUMENT OF THE DISSERTATION

As I said before, in my dissertation I argue (1) that practical norms are the norms of non-instrumental practical rationality, (2) that these norms ultimately trace back to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality, (3) that the *form* of action motivation (the way action motivation is determined by these incommensurable requirements) is the form of practical reasoning (the way practical reasoning is determined by these incommensurable requirements), and (4) that the form of practical reasoning and hence of action motivation is the form of practical self-consciousness; self-consciousness on the part of the agent as determined in her reasoning about what to do by the right practical requirement for the circumstances; such that when things go well it constitutes practical knowledge of oneself as correctly determining what to do in the circumstances.

To reach this conclusion I argue against three popular interpretations of the normativist commitment. On the instrumentalist interpretation, which is the topic of the first chapter, the norms to which action motivation is subject are the norms of instrumental rationality. On this interpretation, an action motivation counts *as such* to the extent that it is subject to the irreducible, action-guiding requirement to take the means to one's end. Thus the practical norms (which explain motivation) are norms guiding intentional action undertaken as means, and their source lies in propositional attitudes (intentions, desires, etc.) for the ends of the actions.

On the *monolithic* interpretation of the normativist commitment, which is the topic of the second chapter, the norms to which action motivation is subject are the norms of non-instrumental practical rationality, and they are determined as such by a single commensurable

principle of practical rationality.¹⁶ Depending on the details of each theory, this may either be the requirement to be motivated so as to approximate or satisfy an agent-general desire whose maximal realization constitutes practical rationality, or to be motivated in conformity with one's judgments about one's reasons, or to just reason soundly about what to do. So, the practical norms in terms of which action motivation is explained are the norms which guide intentional action in becoming a perfect instance of its kind; i.e. practically rational. Their source lies in the single, commensurable requirement which constitutes practical rationality.

On the *multi-dimensional* interpretation of the normativist commitment, which is the topic of the third chapter, the norms to which action motivation is subject are the norms of non-instrumental practical rationality and they are determined by the incommensurable requirements which constitute it.¹⁷ These requirements nevertheless issue in intentional action that is unified across the board and not fragmented depending on the specific guise of action motivation they each time determine.¹⁸ On the multi-dimensional theories that I will examine, the reason is that these incommensurable rational requirements constitute more or less genuine approximations of the *ideal* form of practical rationality. Depending on the details of each multi-dimensional theory, this ideal form may be conceived as constituted by: the exercise of an extra capacity whose function is to choose among the incommensurable practical reasons or agent-general dispositions, or the approximation to the ideal manifestation of one of the forms of practical reasoning, or the ideal form of unity of intentional action constituted by the *collective* exercise of

¹⁶ The exact sense in which it is commensurable will depend on the details of each monolithic theory.

¹⁷ Again, the exact sense of incommensurability will depend on the details of each theory.

¹⁸ I will have more to say about the issue of unity of intentional action in the last chapter. For now let me just note that if the requirements to which action motivation is subject are incommensurable, if for instance prudence or appetite constitute incommensurable requirements to which action motivation is subject, then it may seem as if calling them both intentional is merely a notational device used for our convenience.

the proper functions of incommensurable forms of practical reasoning. The practical requirements that determine action motivation are ultimately, on these views, to be explained as approximating more or less perfectly to the genuine or ideal requirement of practical rationality.

In contrast to these interpretations, I argue that the norms to which action motivation is subject are the norms of the incommensurable requirements of practical rationality which really are incommensurable; i.e. they are no more or less ideally rational. Practical reasoning nevertheless issues in intentional action as unified across the board and not fragmented, because it is determined by these requirements in a single way. In reasoning practically under any of these incommensurable requirements the agent is conscious of herself as determined in her reasoning by the right requirement for the circumstances. When things go well, this self-consciousness may constitute practical knowledge; knowledge of oneself as rightly determining what to do in the circumstances.

Each of my arguments against these interpretations is an attempt on my part to challenge the following misguided treatments of motivation in contemporary discussions of related issues. (1) Motivation is sometimes without question taken to be subject to the norms of instrumental rationality.¹⁹ In the first chapter of this dissertation I argue that there is no instrumental rationality to begin with, if we take the requirements of rationality to be action-guiding. (2) Motivation is usually without question taken to be the arbitrator in discussions of practical rationality, since it is commonly accepted as a premise that practical reasons should be able to

¹⁹ So for instance, a great number of accounts of practical rationality assume that motivation is unproblematically subject to the norms of instrumental rationality and proceed to investigate whether it may also be subject to non-instrumental, categorical norms. Christine Korsgaard challenged this assumption in her seminal paper on the normativity of instrumental reason (Korsgaard, 1997), thus opening the road for non-instrumentalist approaches to practical rationality.

motivate.²⁰ In the second chapter of this dissertation I argue that considerations of motivation do not so much *arbitrate* between *existing* conceptions of practical rationality, as *demand* the development of *new* ones. (3) Motivation is usually taken without question to be *more or less genuine or ideally rational* depending on whether the agent's capacity to act is determined by reason or appetite, and so independently of the circumstances each time.²¹ In the third chapter I argue that all incommensurable requirements determining practical reasoning (and so both reason and appetite, if they are such requirements) may issue in unified intentional action because, depending on the circumstances, each of them potentially constitutes practical knowledge. *Therefore* the *ideal rationality* or *genuineness* of each of these requirements depends, other things being equal, on the circumstances, and not on some prejudice about their intrinsic genuineness or ideality as forms of rationality.

Since the three arguments aim at addressing fundamental misconceptions of motivation in different areas of discourse, my argument in each chapter takes a different form. In the first chapter, my argument against the view that practical norms guide action conceived of as means to an end focuses on a more fundamental presupposition of this view. It thus constitutes an argument against the genus to which this view belongs. In particular, I focus on the idea that instrumental rationality is constituted by a distinctive, action-guiding instrumental requirement, in the way suggested by philosophers like Mark Schroeder, John Broome, etc. I argue, in something like the spirit of Joseph Raz and Niko Kolodny, but against their proposed alternatives, that there is no distinctive, action-guiding principle of instrumental rationality at all.

²⁰ For a fine analysis of these discussions see Setiya, *forthcoming*.

²¹ See Tenenbaum, 2007; Korsgaard, 1997; Parfit, 1997; etc.

The conception of the practical norms which explain action motivation as issuing from intentions for ends is criticized as subscribing to a misguided conception of instrumental normativity.

In the second chapter, I argue against the view that the practical norms which guide action motivation are internal to a single commensurable desire, or type of judgment, or (*individual*) *determination* of reasoning, which *alone* constitutes practical rationality, by focusing on what I take to be a platitude about our motivational life. I argue that the monolithic conception of action motivation, on which it is determined by a single commensurable requirement of practical rationality, fails to accommodate this platitude. In particular, following the Platonic argument in book iv of the *Republic*,²² I argue that the possibility of primary motivational conflict, i.e. the possibility of being motivated in opposed ways towards one and the same action at the same time and in the same respect, shows that practical rationality should be conceived of as *multi-dimensional*. In other words, that practical rationality should, contra the assumption of David Velleman, Thomas Scanlon, Thomas Nagel, etc., be conceived of as either issuing in judgments about incommensurable aspects of practical reason-hood, or determined by incommensurable requirements of practical reasoning. Thus the views on which the norms of motivation are internal to a single commensurable desire, or type of judgment, or (*individual*) *determination* of reasoning, which *alone* constitutes practical rationality are criticized as being built on inadequate conceptions of practical rationality.

In the third chapter I argue against the view that the practical norms which guide intentional action are internal to a separate, purely practical or ideally rational capacity which provides the unity of the multiple guises (i.e. (*individual*) *determinations* by incommensurable practical

²² My references to the Platonic text are from Grube's translation. See Grube, 1992.

requirements) of practical rationality. First I argue against the postulation of the will by Joseph Raz, Thomas Pink, Jay Wallace, etc. as the extra executive capacity whose function is to choose among the incommensurable aspects of practical worth-whileness. Then I argue against Sergio Tenenbaum's postulation of an ideal form of practical reasoning as what incommensurable forms of rationality ought to approximate, and finally I argue against Christine Korsgaard's postulation of the collective exercise of the functions of incommensurable forms of practical reasoning as the ideal form of unity of intentional action. In this case, the views on which the norms of action motivation are traced to a single (purely practical or ideally rational) capacity which provides the unity of intentional action are criticized as illegitimately promoting one requirement of practical rationality as more *practical* or more *rational* than another.

Instead, I propose, all the normative sources of action motivation are equally practical and rational, depending on the circumstances. *Therefore* the explanation of the unity of intentional action cannot be a matter of postulating a separate capacity as the *most practical* or the *most genuine* unifying capacity, of which all other practical rational capacities fall short. On the contrary, the explanation of the unity of intentional action must be a matter of identifying what in each plausible *guise of practical reasoning* (i.e. *(individual) determination* by incommensurable principle) enables it to issue in equally practical and rational intentional action or simply in choice, depending on the circumstances. The crucial enabling feature, I argue at the end, is the *form* of practical reasoning: the way in which it is determined by the incommensurable practical requirements. This way is the self-consciousness of the agent as being determined in her reasoning by the right requirement; which may constitute practical knowledge depending on the circumstances, and not on some prejudice about what practical requirement is *really* the most genuine or the ideally rational.

Even though the arguments of the three chapters take three different forms depending on the areas of discussion in which they each time intervene, they are not at all unrelated. In fact, each builds on material and insight gained from the previous argument. In chapter two I can argue *from* facts about motivation *to* demands on the theory of practical rationality, because in the first chapter it transpires that instrumental rationality (rationality constituted by a distinctive, action-guiding instrumental principle) is no part of practical rationality, but (contra Kolodny and Raz and following Michael Thompson) that it nevertheless constitutes an altogether distinctive form of normativity. The sort of normativity it constitutes is internal to the elementary *structure* of intentional action *as such*, and not to the character of specific (i.e. more or less rational) types of intentional actions. In particular, in the second chapter I can assume that primary motivational opposition is the opposition of means-end syntheses and not entities within that order (i.e. actions treated as means only), because it transpires at the end of the first chapter that intentional action is not an entity *within* an instrumental order but the very synthesis of an instrumental order.

The same is true of the transition from the second to the third chapter. In the third chapter I can argue that we should not postulate a purely practical capacity which is not necessarily rational or a practical rational capacity which is *ideally* rational in order to explain choice in the face of conflict between incommensurable requirements of practical rationality, because in the second chapter it transpires that if we posit distinct forms of practical rationality to explain primary motivational conflict, we must take them to be incommensurable. Both a *purely* practical and an *ideally* rational practical capacity would have to be informed by *one* of these incommensurable forms of practical rationality, and so the remaining forms of practical rationality would have to be *a priori* understood either as *less practical* or as *less rational*; thus turning their purported incommensurability into a mere word play.

If it works, the progression of my thought in this dissertation shows (1) that platitudes about motivation play an important role in determining our conception of practical rationality, provided that we have the right conception of the elementary structure of intentional action; i.e. provided that we understand the elementary structure of intentional action as the structure of a form of event or process and not a propositional attitude, and (2) that the issue of explaining intentional action as unified across the board and not fragmented depending on the *guise* of practical reasoning it issues from plays an important role in determining our conception of practical reasoning, provided that we understand that the requirements of practical rationality are incommensurable.²³

²³ The question of unity of intentional action is usually treated as the issue of explaining practical reasoning or practical rationality by finding the common factor in all intentional actions and attributing it to practical reasoning; hence the common style of arguing against theories of practical reasoning, based on counter-examples. But, I believe that the problem of unity in this sense is not a real question. For no sane theory of practical reasoning should suggest that there are no borderline cases of intentionality anyway.

1. INSTRUMENTALIST NORMATIVIST THEORIES: *DESIRE BASED THEORIES OF MOTIVATION AND THE SCOPE OF INSTRUMENTAL RATIONALITY*

1.1 INTRODUCTION

In the introduction I motivated the assumption of the truth of the *normativist commitment*. On this commitment, to explain action motivation *as such* is to reveal it to conform or fail to conform to, or conform by approximation to, representations of practical norms; i.e. to reveal it to be subject to representations of practical norms. Think of the following two cases: I am moved to open the door because I'm under hypnosis and I am moved to open the door because I want to get ice-cream. On the normativist commitment, whose truth I will assume in the remainder of this dissertation, the second explanation explains my being moved to open the door as the motivation to perform an intentional action, and it works by way of revealing the explanandum (being moved to open the door) as being subject to *distinctive* representations of norms which make the ensuing action intentional.²⁴

On the instrumental interpretation of the normativist commitment, these norms are the norms of instrumental rationality. On the standard formulation of the constitutive principle of

²⁴ In the first case too, one could claim the explanation works by showing the explanandum to be subject to norms, but these are not the kinds of norms that make an action intentional. In general, normative explanations explain by revealing the explananda to be subject to norms. This is possible because being subject to norms has a distinctive explanatory power; distinct from that of falling under patterns of happenings. For this characterization of the distinction between types of explanatory power see Davidson, 2004, p. 115 and McDowell, 1998, p. 331.

instrumental rationality, if one intends to do E and believes that M is the means to E then one ought to intend or do M. On the narrow scope interpretation of this requirement, the proposition that one ought to do M is detachable from the conditional by *modus ponens*. So, from the fact that if one intends to do E and believes that M is the means to E, then it follows that one ought to intend or do M. The most popular version of this reading, what I shall be calling ‘instrumentalism’, is the view on which the narrow scope demand that one ought to take the means to one’s end is generated by the intention for that end. On a weaker version of instrumentalism, if one intends to do E, and believes that M is the means to E then one has *adequate subjective reason* to intend or do M.²⁵

On the most popular version of instrumentalism, what I shall be calling Desire Based Theories, action motivation is subject to the constitutive principle of instrumental rationality *and* the source of the normative force of this principle lies in the agent’s desire(s) for the end. To say that action motivation is subject to the constitutive principle of instrumental rationality is to say that an agent counts as being motivated to ϕ (where ϕ is an intentional action) to the extent that in being moved to ϕ she is guided by (or subject to) the principle that she ought to take the means to her end. *Therefore* her motivation issues in intentional action to the extent that her action is (suitably) undertaken as the means to an end; and so to the extent that the action itself is also subject to the means-end principle.²⁶ In what follows I will be calling these theories DBT for short.²⁷ In the main body of this chapter I will focus on instrumentalist theories *as such*, and

²⁵ See Schroeder, 2009.

²⁶ In what follows I shall sometimes refer to action motivation and intentional action interchangeably as being subject to practical norms.

²⁷ For versions of this view see Hubin, 1996, 2001; Lenman, 1996; Schroeder, 2004, 2007, 2009.

I will be using the terminology of intentions to refer interchangeably to intentions, desires, or whatever other attitudes towards ends we take to be normative for intentional action as means.

The claim that distinguishes the DBT from other Desire Based Theories of motivation is that desires exert normative control over the motivation to *y* (e.g. to open the door), qua change-demanding attitudes towards the *end* (e.g. getting ice-cream), of the *means-act* (e.g. opening the door), which is the object of motivation. In other words, on the DBT, desire exerts normative control over intentional action as a means to an end. On this view, to explain a particular disposition to *y* as what issues in intentional action (i.e. as action motivation) is to reveal this disposition to be instrumentally rational: i.e. to reveal it to be subject to the principle that one ought to take the means to one's end.²⁸ In this chapter I will argue on the basis of considerations about the requirement of instrumental rationality, and not on the basis of considerations about the normative potential of desires as such, that the DBT fail to do justice to the normativist commitment. On my suggestion, the DBT fail because they assume a false interpretation of instrumental normativity.

A common objection against instrumentalism is what I shall be calling *the objection from morality*: if one intends to do *E* and the means to one's ends are morally unacceptable, then one has *no* reason whatsoever to intend to do *M*. In this chapter I will argue that a proper appreciation of the objection from morality, which is usually leveled against the narrow scope reading alone, illustrates the failure of John Broome's wide scope interpretation,²⁹ as well as the

²⁸ This is sometimes expressed by saying that an intentional action is an action caused *in the right way* by a desire for an end and the belief that the action is the means to the end, or an action *guided* by a desire for an end and the belief that the action is the means to the end, etc.

²⁹ Broome, 2000.

inadequacy of Niko Kolodny's error theory of the instrumental principle.³⁰ Yet a proper understanding of the objection from morality does not lead to full-blown skepticism about instrumental normativity. Instead, it points the way to an alternative error theory of the appearance of a distinctive principle of instrumental rationality: the Structure-of-Intention Error Theory. On this alternative theory it merely *appears* that there is a distinctive, action-guiding instrumental principle because the elementary structure of intention is an instrumental order that unifies a type of process, rather than the elementary structure of a propositional attitude.

In the second section of this chapter I will present the typical objections to the standard form of instrumentalism, the objections from bootstrapping and *akrasia*, and show that a weaker version of instrumentalism, of the sort that Mark Schroeder defends,³¹ has the resources to deal with these objections. On this weaker version, if one intends to do E, and believes that M is the means to E then one has adequate *subjective reason* to intend or do M. In the third section of this chapter I will argue that the weaker version of instrumentalism fails to give an adequate account of the principle of instrumental rationality. The common diagnosis of the failure of this form of instrumentalism is that like all narrow scope readings it fails to appreciate that the instrumental requirement is a requirement of coherence; practical or theoretical.³² The rationale is simple: if the scope of the instrumental requirement cannot be limited to the intention for the means, then it should be widened to include the entire conditional. In the fourth section I will argue against the appearance that the instrumental requirement has a wide scope, which is defended by John Broome,³³ and in the fifth section I will show that the error theory of this

³⁰ Kolodny, 2005.

³¹ See Schroeder, 2009.

³² Broome, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004; Brunero, 2010; Setiya, 2007b; Dancy, 2000; Wallace, 2001; etc.

³³ Broome, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2004.

misleading appearance, which is suggested by Niko Kolodny and Joseph Raz,³⁴ is inadequate. We do not have to revert to full-blown skepticism with regard to means-end normativity. An adequate error theory of the principle of instrumental rationality is forthcoming, as I will claim in the sixth section. This is the Structure-of-Intention Error Theory, which is based on Michael Thompson's conception of intention as the distinctive unity of a process and not as a propositional attitude. This understanding of the structure of intention makes room for an alternative version of the Desire Based Theories, against which I will argue in the next chapter.

In the rest of this introduction I will distinguish my argument against the DBT from the standard criticism of such views in the literature. The common argument against the attempt to ground the norms to which action motivation is subject in desire is that desire *as such* has no normative authority at all. On this common understanding, desires may happen to have normative authority, but only as grounded in reason claims. The reasons for denying that desires as such have normative authority vary between different versions of the argument. In some versions, desires themselves lack justificatory power; in some, they cannot be universalized in the appropriate way; in some, they do not constitute discriminative responses to experience, etc.³⁵ Whatever the details of the reason for the rejection of the normative potential of desire, the common claim is that desire cannot set the normative standards to which action motivation is subject because desire cannot set normative standards at all.

In this chapter I will concur with the conclusion of the common argument that the DBT fail to explain the sense in which action motivation is subject to practical norms. But I will depart

³⁴ See Kolodny, 2005 and Raz, 2005.

³⁵ For versions of these arguments see Korsgaard, 1997, although Korsgaard later came to change her mind about this (Korsgaard, 2009, esp. section 4.1.; Scanlon, 1998; Raz, 1999; Heuer, 2004; Audi, 2002; etc.

from the common argument on the diagnosis of this failure. The DBT fail, I will argue, because they assume a problematic conception of practical rationality in general, on which its requirements are directed towards the action as a means and are derived from an attitude (intention, desire, etc.) that determines an end. Desire, I will argue, has no normative authority *if* it is embedded as a ground, or the source of a ground, in this problematic conception of practical rationality. This leaves it open that desire *per se* may have normative authority.

If the common argument against the DBT were sound, then these theories would fail to do justice to the normativist commitment merely because the particular attitudes, to whose normative control motivation would have to be subject, would themselves not be fit to require anything *at all*. As Dennis Stampe quite plausibly suggests, though, “The fact that I want something, in and of itself, is ordinarily a reason for me to act accordingly.”³⁶ Desire, as he points out, does not *move* us with mere force, but with a certain right. If nothing else we are beings whose function is to maintain our form in part through the satisfaction of our desires. There is a plausible conception of what kind of animals we are, on which our desires have a *claim* to satisfaction just because they are *ours*; in other words, just because this satisfaction is part of what maintains our form.³⁷ This claim is, on an intuitive conception, a normative claim.

But as Anscombe plausibly points out, to say that one *merely* wants a saucer of mud, without any further characterization of *what* one wants it *for*, is to leave us in the dark about what it could possibly mean for the agent to “want” in this case at all.³⁸ The following question now arises: if we find it intuitive that desire *per se* has normative authority, as Stampe insists, then why should

³⁶ See Stampe, 1986, p. 342.

³⁷ See for example Korsgaard 1998.

³⁸ See Anscombe, 1957, p. 70-1.

we need to add a *further* characterization to the mere wanting of the saucer of mud to explain it? Are the two claims about desiring really incompatible? In what follows I will show that they are not.

In fact, it becomes apparent that they are not once we appreciate that the DBT fail because they misidentify the *scope* of desire's normative authority. As I will show at the end of this chapter, desire may have normative authority over motivation if the object of motivation is taken to be a means-ends synthesis and not what is in reality a means-description of an action.³⁹ Anscombe's example is meant to show that wanting can be seen to move us with a certain right, as Stampe insists, *only when* it can be seen to ground the way in which certain means descriptions have been represented in connection to certain ends descriptions. Upon being told that one wants a saucer of mud we are left clueless as to what it may mean to "want" it, not because desire does not *per se* legitimize and thereby explain a possible disposition to achieve its object, but because in the case of mud it is strikingly difficult to *guess* to what end the act of getting the saucer of mud might be connected, in the specific manner of connection typically grounded by desire. In cases where we merely say we want a piece of chocolate cake or a dream job, etc. it is strikingly easy to guess to what end the means of getting the chocolate cake or the dream job might be connected in the manner represented by desire. We usually desire a piece of cake to satisfy our hunger or appetite for sweet things and a dream job to make money or fulfill our talents. But when it comes to a saucer of mud is hard to imagine how its connection with an end description might be grounded by desire. I shall return to this at the end of the chapter. For now let me just emphasize what I will try to show is wrong with the DBT: not that desire has no

³⁹ I will explain talk of means-end synthesis in section 2.6 of this chapter.

normative power, but that the normative power of desire cannot be embedded in the instrumentalist conception of practical norms. Let me now turn to instrumentalism.

1.2 THE SIMPLE NARROW SCOPE INTERPRETATION OF THE INSTRUMENTAL REQUIREMENT AND THE OBJECTION FROM BOOTSTRAPPING AND REASONS

The standard objection against the narrow scope reading of the instrumental principle is the objection from bootstrapping.⁴⁰ The idea is that if intentions generate requirements, then *merely intending* an action may generate the requirement to perform it. But this is absurd. Similarly, if intentions for ends generate detachable requirements to take the means, then the mere act of intending the end may generate the requirement to perform the means in question, which is also absurd.

One way to meet this objection is to weaken the strictness of the instrumental requirement by suggesting that intending an end gives one a *reason* and not an *obligation* to take the means.⁴¹ Surely the fact that I now intend to smoke gives me a reason to buy cigarettes even if I had absolutely no reason to buy cigarettes before forming the intention. This response can be resisted on two grounds. The first is that by weakening the strictness of the requirement all we have managed to do is to allow the bootstrapping of reasons as opposed to demands. For now I may generate a *reason* to perform an action just by intending it. The second is that the

⁴⁰ For expressions of this objection see Bratman, 1999; Broome, 2001a; Setiya, 2007b; Wallace, 2001; Raz, 2005; etc.

⁴¹ See Schroeder, 2007. For an extensive criticism of this version of instrumentalism see Broome, 2001 and Brunero, 2007.

instrumental requirement is a strict requirement.⁴² An agent who violates it is in a certain sense not as she *ought* to be. Whereas on the weaker version, to not take the means to one's end, when one has a reason to do so, says nothing about whether the agent failed to be as she ought to be. After all, there may always be stronger or overriding reasons to not take the means one has a *pro tanto* reason to take.

But one could ignore the latter form of resistance and meet the former one by suggesting that intending unproblematically generates reasons if its essence is to track reasons. On this response, the objection from bootstrapping depends partly on the assumption that intending is something that can be done at will.⁴³ If it were not in the essence of intention to constitute a response to reasons which lies beyond our will's manipulative control, then intention could be formed at will. If intention could be formed at will, the objection from bootstrapping would stand. But we do not have to assume such a controversial view of intention even if we want to retain a Humean version of the narrow scope reading of instrumental rationality. If, on the other hand, intending an end is essentially responsive to reasons, it starts to make sense to say that intending an end gives one reason to take the means. To begin with, intending an end would be a normative attitude and so the reason to take the means, i.e. some normative material, would be derived from normative material. Moreover, on this response, it is more plausible to suppose that intending an end does not so much generate a *new* reason to intend the means, as *transmit* existing reasons for intending the end to the intention for the means. In other words, on this picture, what makes an intention reason giving is nothing other than its reason tracking power. The principle of instrumental rationality could be construed as a principle of *transmission* of

⁴² See for instance Setiya, 2007b; Broome, 2001a; etc..

⁴³ On the impossibility of intending at will see Hieronymi, 2006.

reason-hood; so that when one intends to E one thereby has a reason to E only in the inoffensive sense that one has thereby tracked the reasons that there are for E-ing.

Against the *transmission* version of the narrow scope reading one may point to cases in which the means one envisages are actions which there is absolutely no reason to perform; not even a *transmitted* reason. On this objection, one may, by the lights of the narrow scope reading, have an instrumental reason to form a particular intention to take the means to one's end, while there may be facts in the world which constitute *silencing*⁴⁴ – and not merely overriding – reasons to *not* form that intention at all. Think of the desperate protagonist in Gavras' brilliant movie, *The Ax*.⁴⁵ The hero of this movie intends to get a particular job he deserves and is perfect for, but believes that the only way to do so it is to kill all his competitors. On the *transmission* version of the narrow scope view, that agent has at least *some* reason to kill his competitors. But this is a conclusion we are not ready to stomach. Even though we may admit that the agent may *initially* have had *some* reason for *wanting* to get that particular job, we should readily claim that he has absolutely no reason to kill anyone in order to get it. In other words he has neither an all things considered reason, nor a *pro tanto* reason to do something which is morally unacceptable. This is the core of the common interpretation of the objection from morality.

⁴⁴ On silencing reasons see McDowell, 1979; on the role of consideration of silencing reasons in assessing the truth in instrumentalism see Setiya, 2005.

⁴⁵ Kostas Gavras, *The Ax*, aka *Le Couperet*, 2005.

1.3 MARK SCHROEDER'S ALTERNATIVE: *SUBJECTIVE* DEMANDS AND *SUBJECTIVE* REASONS

As Mark Schroeder has recently tried to show, the narrow scope theorist can distinguish between subjective and objective demands in a way that blocks these counter-intuitive results.⁴⁶ On his suggestion, if one intends to do E, one believes that one has reason to do E. It follows that if one's belief is true one has an objective reason to do E.⁴⁷ From the subject's point of view one's own beliefs simply are true. So, from the subjective perspective the agent has an objective reason to do E, and from the objective perspective the agent has a subjective reason to do E. So, if one intends to do E, one has a subjective reason to do E. If one has a subjective reason to do E and believes that to do E one must do M then one has a subjective reason to do M.⁴⁸ The instrumental principle can now be formulated as follows: if one intends to do E and believes that M is the means to E then one has a *subjective pro tanto* reason to do M. The detachment of reasons should no longer be embarrassing, because the demand they express is merely subjective. And there is no bootstrapping either because the demand to take the means is not generated out of nowhere, but is transmitted from the *subjective* reason one has to intend the end to the means.

This move might appear to deal with the objection from morality, for the fact that one may have a subjective reason to do something says nothing about one's objective reasons. At most, what it does say is what objective reason one *would* have *if* one's beliefs were true. This is compatible with the McDowellian reading of moral reasons, on which the fact that some

⁴⁶ See Schroeder, 2004, 2009b.

⁴⁷ Or, more generally, if one intends to do E one has some beliefs such that if their content were true one objectively ought to do E. See Schroeder, 2009b, p. 236.

⁴⁸ For the derivation of this conditional see Schroeder, 2009b, p. 234.

considerations are salient means that competing considerations are not merely overridden, but altogether silenced. On this version of instrumentalism, intending an end and having a belief about the necessary means says nothing about one's objective reasons to take the means. This need not mean, though, that one cannot have a subjective reason to take the means. In our job candidate example, if one intends to get a job and believes that killing the competitors is the only way to get it, then one has subjective reason to kill the competitors, even if one has absolutely no objective reason to do so.

But the narrow scope reading does not have the resources to block the possibility of the following re-description of our job candidate case: as a case in which an agent may *truly* believe that she ought to intend an end E and truly believe that the means to E is M, and yet have absolutely *no* objective reason to (intend to) take the means. We may for instance claim that the *Ax* hero may truly believe that he ought to get the job because he is trained for it, whereas all of his competitors are not, and because he otherwise won't be able to make a living. Also, he may truly believe that the *only* way he can get the job is to kill his competitors, because he lives in an utterly corrupt world. And yet, we want to say, he has absolutely no objective reason to kill his competitors. The obvious way to block this re-description of the case is to claim that the agent's belief that he ought to get the job in the first place is *not* true. For the fact that the only way he can achieve the end he intends is morally unacceptable is by itself reason why his belief that he ought to intend the end in the first place is not true. But this response is unavailable to the narrow scope reading of the instrumental requirement.

The particular character of the means to our hero's end cannot make a difference to the truth of his belief that he ought to intend the end. Unless figuring out whether one ought to intend an

end somehow depended on figuring out whether one ought to intend the necessary means to one's end. But in this case there would not be much point in insisting, as Schroeder does,⁴⁹ on the asymmetry between different ways of satisfying the instrumental requirement that the narrow scope interpretation secures, but the wide-scope interpretation doesn't. The point of insisting on this asymmetry is to bring forth the intuition that the normative force of the requirement has one direction only: it moves from the intention to achieve the end to the intention to take the means. This must be true on *any* narrow scope interpretation; even, that is, on the interpretations which may not take the source of this requirement to be the intention for the end but some general fact about agency or reason.

If we disregard this intuition about the asymmetry of ways of satisfying the requirement, Schroeder implies,⁵⁰ we leave the following possibility open: that it may be rational on the part of the agent to manipulate her way out of a plausible violation of the instrumental requirement by taking steps to alter the conditions that allow for the instrumental predicament in the first place. The hero of the *Ax* could, for instance, convince the firm posting the job to cancel the posting. This, as Schroeder points out, would not be a rational thing to do for someone who wants the job. But if the agent's belief that he ought to get the job depends on his beliefs about whether he ought to take the means, it is not clear in what sense the normative force of the requirement would still be moving from the intention for the end to the intention for the means. Positing a dependency of beliefs about whether one ought to intend an end on beliefs about whether one ought to intend the means cancels out this asymmetry of the ways of satisfying the instrumental requirement that Schroeder insists on. If the asymmetry in the ways of satisfying the

⁴⁹ See Schroeder 2004.

⁵⁰ See Schroeder 2004: 339-340.

requirement is thus not preserved, it is not clear in what sense the requirement to take the means is generated from the intention for the end in the way that the narrow scope reading suggests.

At this point, there are two obvious ways out of the explanatory predicament that the narrow scope reading faces. The first is to attempt an explanation of how it is sometimes possible for the normative force of the instrumental requirement to be directed towards intentions for ends. The second is to deny that it is possible for thoughts or intentions of means and ends to ever come apart in the ways that raise the puzzles of instrumental rationality, by suggesting that to intend an end *just is* to intend the means to it.

One expression of the latter skeptical response is Finlay's definition of intending to perform an action, as intending the means to the realization of that state of affairs or the execution of the action.⁵¹ This definition soon needs correction because it is conceivable that one may intend to bring about a state of affairs without yet knowing what the means to its realization are. On a slightly corrected version then, A intends that p if and only if A intends that A takes the means A knows or expects to know are the means to p. On this view it is impossible to intend an end without *thereby* intending the means to it. Figuring out whether one ought to intend an end cannot *depend on* figuring out whether one ought to intend the means because it *consists in* figuring out whether one ought to intend the means.

But if to intend an end E just is to intend the means M one knows or expects to know are the means to E, it does not make any sense to say that one may intend an end without intending the means to it. If it does not make sense to say that one may intend an end without intending the means to it, one cannot logically fail to follow the instrumental principle that one ought to take or

⁵¹ See for instance Finlay, 2007, 2009.

intend the means to one's ends. If one cannot logically fail to follow the instrumental principle, then, surely, it follows that one cannot be subject to it.⁵² This full blown skepticism explains why figuring out whether one ought to intend the means to one's end must play a role in figuring out whether one ought to intend the end; but only at the cost of denying the normative character of the connection between the thought of the means and the thought of the end.

But such a radical denial of the normative character of the connection between thought of means and thought of ends leaves us with no plausible error theory to account for the appearance that there is a distinctive action guiding requirement of instrumental rationality. For this appearance is not a mere philosopher's whim. It is present when we say things like: "I don't understand how you can sit all day and do nothing when you say you intend to find a job," or "I don't understand how they still intend to win the war given that they would have to kill the civilians to do so." At any rate, to revert to such a full-blown skepticism one would first have to show that the following types of theories fail: non-skeptical alternatives to the narrow scope reading and more sophisticated skeptical theories (error theories). The error theories deny the existence of irreducible instrumental rational principles but do not altogether deny the normative connection between thought of ends and means. In the following two sections I will argue that Broome's non-skeptical wide scope alternative and Kolodny's sophisticated error theory both fail to do full justice to the intuition codified in the objection from morality. This failure, I will argue, does not show that full blown skepticism is in order. A better error theory is forthcoming;

⁵² For an insightful discussion of the connection between the possibility of violating a principle and subjection to this principle see Lavin, 2004. On what Lavin calls the logical interpretation of the error constraint on a plausible theory of what it is to be subject to a principle: "an agent is subject to a principle only if there is some kind of action such that if the agent did it she would thereby violate the principle" (Lavin, 2004, p. 426). My point here is that on Finlay's account, there is no action such that if the agent did she would thereby be violating the instrumental principle and so it does not make sense to say that the agent is subject to this principle.

what I shall be calling the Structure-of-Intention error theory. I will end this chapter by trying to lay it out in its essentials and explain how it saves the phenomena.

1.4 THE WIDE-SCOPE RESPONSE TO THE OBJECTION FROM MORALITY

As I said above, one does not need to deny the normative character of the means-end connection to meet the explanatory demand raised by the objection from morality. One can instead suggest that the normative force of the instrumental requirement may on occasions move towards the intention for the end, because the instrumental requirement can be interpreted to have a wide rather than a narrow scope. As I will now show, this suggestion has a consequence contrary to its intent: it allows the normative force of the instrumental requirement to occasionally move towards the intention for the end, without really *explaining* why figuring out whether to intend the means to one's end *must*, at least sometimes, play a role in figuring out whether to intend the end.

Let me explain this. On the wide scope interpretation, the requirement to take the means is not detachable from the conditional that if one intends an end one ought to take the means to one's end. The detachment is not permitted because the scope of the instrumental ought is not limited to the consequent of the conditional but includes the entire conditional. On this interpretation, the requirement that one ought to take the means to one's end is the wide scope requirement that one ought to [take the means to an end *if* one intends the end]. In other words, the normative force of the requirement is not necessarily directed towards the intention for the means. Its force may move in the other direction. For, on the wide scope reading, the

requirement is satisfied when the relevant attitudes (intentions or intentions and beliefs) of the agent form a coherent whole;⁵³ not when the agent takes the means to one's end, whatever these means happen to be.

As Broome⁵⁴ readily proposes, and Kolodny⁵⁵ denies, the wide scope requirement is a requirement which governs states and not processes. It requires of the agent that she be in a state that does not involve a violation of the instrumental principle of means-end coherence. It does not itself require of an agent that she go through any one *particular* type of process. For instance it does *not* require of an agent that she revise her intention for the end or that she revise her belief that M is the means to her end or that she intend the means to her end in order to satisfy the requirement.

A popular argument against the wide scope interpretation is that on some occasions it is forced to turn into a narrow scope requirement.⁵⁶ That is to say, it is forced to interpret the instrumental requirement as demanding that the agent ought to go through a *particular* process, when the balance of reasons may require another. Say that the *Ax* hero is required to revise his intention to get the job to be coherent. Now say that it may turn out that he cannot, for some reason or other, revise his intention for the end. Say he is an extremely stubborn person. In such a case, on this objection, the wide scope requirement will be transformed into the narrow scope requirement to take the means. But the truth is that even in these cases the wide scope theorist can insist that the scope of the requirement remains wide. She can claim that the agent is, even

⁵³ Whether this coherence is a coherence of intentions, or intentions and beliefs, or beliefs alone (i.e. whether the wide scope requirement is a requirement of practical or theoretical reason) is beside the point here. What matters for my purposes is that the scope of the requirement is, in both cases, wide.

⁵⁴ Broome, 2000.

⁵⁵ Kolodny, 2005.

⁵⁶ For this criticism see for instance Setiya 2007, and Greenspan 1975.

in such cases, under the requirement to do what she was under the requirement to do before it was suggested that she could not do it. That one may not be able in some sense to *actually* revise one's intention for the end does not turn the requirement to be coherent into the requirement to go through a *particular* process or form a *particular* attitude. At least no more than the fact that one cannot actually revise a murderous intention (say because one is a sociopath) turns the legal requirement to not kill into some other sort of requirement; say a requirement of etiquette.

The impression that the instrumental requirement ought to be transformed into a different *type* of requirement (one of narrow scope) in case the agent is not able to alter her attitudes is misleading. We get this misleading impression because on the wide scope reading the object of the requirement is a conditional, and so it can *in principle* be satisfied in a variety of ways. The fact that the requirement can in principle be satisfied in a variety of ways does not in itself imply that it is such that it *always* ought to be satisfiable. To assume this is to assume that the principle is not a practical principle; one that an agent may be subject to, even when she may happen to be in some sense unable to follow it through.⁵⁷ To assume the contrary would be to assume that an agent cannot suffer from weakness of will, apathy, depression, etc.

More importantly, though, Broome can respond that the objection itself rests on the assumption that the agent *cannot* for some reason or other do what she ought to do (i.e. revise her intention for the end). For on Broome's view revising his intention for the end is what the agent ought to do in the circumstances. To say that one cannot do that is to say that the agent cannot not do what he ought to do. This is to *assume*, and not *argue*, that Broome's wide scope account

⁵⁷ Exactly what this sense is is not important for my purposes here. What matters is that "some" such sense must exist. This is not to deny that "ought" implies "can." It is to deny that "ought" implies "can" in every possible sense of "can." So for instance one may have the capacity to swim even as one sleeps. But I would think that one "cannot" actually swim while sleeping.

is wrong. In this case, Broome might say that to push the objection further is to support the inconsistent claim that because one cannot do what one ought to do, one ought to do something else, on the basis of the general principle that “ought” implies “can.” The very premise of the argument, that ‘one cannot do what one ought to do’, is, by the lights of this further premise stating the general principle that “ought” implies “can”, simply inadmissible.

The fact that the instrumental requirement is such that it could, in circumstances x, be satisfied in way x as it ought to, *and* in circumstances y in way y as it ought to, does not mean that when, in circumstances y, it cannot be satisfied in way y *as it ought to*, then it ought instead to be satisfied in way x. This cannot be the meaning of the *practical* version of the wide scope interpretation.⁵⁸ But this does not have to be the meaning of the practical wide scope instrumental ought. If it so happens that one may not, in some sense, be able to do what one is required to do, this does not imply that one ought to do something else instead. In the same way, the fact that the sociopath may be unable to follow the law because he is a sociopath does not mean that he ought to do something else instead.

The drawback of the practical wide scope reading is not that under given circumstances it is forced to abandon the symmetry it assumes exists among the different ways of satisfying the instrumental requirement. The fault of this account is that, as Schroeder also suggests,⁵⁹ it *cannot* abandon this symmetry, when it *should*. This symmetry is exactly what makes it the case that a way of satisfying the requirement which is demanded by circumstances x cannot simply replace a way of satisfying it which is required in circumstances y. For instance, each time the wide scope requirement requires that the agent ought to revise her end in order to maintain a

⁵⁸ See Setiya, 2007b.

⁵⁹ See Schroeder, 2004.

coherent set of attitudes, what is required is that the agent ought to perform *a particular* action *qua maintaining a coherent set of attitudes*. In other words, the agent is not required to do two separate things: revise her intention for the end and maintain a coherent set of attitudes, such that when the first fails the agent can always find an alternative way to satisfy the second. On the contrary, what the agent is required to do is a particular action which constitutes the way to maintain the coherent set of attitudes.

In our job candidate example for instance, to say that one ought rationally to revise one's intention for the end is to say that it is revising one's intention to get the job *in particular* that makes one's attitudes coherent in the circumstances. To object that if one cannot revise one's intention for the end in the circumstances one must be rationally required to take the means to one's end is to assume that the wide scope requirement simply requires that one ought to [either revise one's end or take the means to one's end]. But there is an alternative interpretation of the conditional requirement, on which one ought to [either revise one's intention for the end or intend the means, *depending on the circumstances*].

The symmetry between the different ways or “processes”⁶⁰ through which one may satisfy the requirement of coherence is not an expression of the fact that in any particular circumstance, all possible processes of getting to that state are perfectly interchangeable. The asymmetry is an expression of the following fact: that the instrumental principle of practical rationality captures that aspect of the practical all-out ought of most or conclusive reasons, which concerns the state of coherence the agent finds oneself in, *after* she has done what she ought to do all things considered.

⁶⁰ In using the terminology of processes in this connection I'm following the terminology of Broome, Schroeder and Kolodny.

The problem with the wide scope interpretation is that even if, contra Setiya,⁶¹ we accept that the requirement it specifies concerns one aspect of practical rationality, this requirement has little of the explanatory power that our intuitions point to.⁶² The Ax hero example presented a problem for the narrow scope reading because the normative force of the instrumental requirement seemed to move from the intention for the means to the intention for the end; not because it simply required that one ought to revise one's intention for the end. On the wide scope interpretation, as I said above, the instrumental requirement captures that aspect of practical rationality which essentially concerns the *state* the agent finds herself in, when she is practically rational; not the instrumental process she ought to go through. If this is right, the wide scope interpretation will be equally unable to explain what seems to be involved in the instrumental requirement: that figuring out whether to intend the means to one's ends ought to play some role in figuring out whether one ought to intend one's end. The objection from morality codifies the following intuition: when the principle of instrumental rationality demands that one ought to intend the end, it does not demand that one ought to intend the end *simply*, but *on the basis of consideration of the means*. Similarly, when it demands that one ought to intend the means, it does not demand that one ought to intend the means *simply*, but *on the basis of consideration of the end*.

On the wide scope reading, though, to say that one ought to intend the end on the basis of consideration of the means just is to say that one ought to intend the end *on the basis of consideration of the requirement of coherence*. For if what I said above is right, on the wide scope reading, this claim translates into the following claim: "one ought to intend the end qua

⁶¹ See Setiya, 2007b.

⁶² Kolodny, 2005 and Schroeder, 2009 seem to suspect this, even if they don't quite formulate it explicitly.

maintaining a coherent set of attitudes, on the basis of considering the end in connection with the means (on the *de dicto* interpretation of “the means”), and so, on the basis of considering the action as subject to the requirement of coherence.” But it can’t be part of the content of the instrumental requirement that one *ought* to intend something on the basis of this *very* ought. The wide scope reading cannot capture that part of practical instrumental rationality which seems to concern the directed movement of normative force across means-end relations. As we saw above, the narrow scope reading cannot manage to capture this aspect of practical instrumental rationality either, for it simply assumes that the relevant normative force can only move in one direction. Do we have to revert to Finlay’s full blown skepticism? No. We can, instead, appeal to a sophisticated skepticism about the instrumental requirement, which does not altogether deny that there is a normative connection between thoughts of ends and thoughts of means.

1.5 NIKO KOLODNY’S *REASONS ERROR THEORY*

On Niko Kolodny’s account, the “ought” of instrumental rationality is reducible to the “ought” of sufficient reasons for forming attitudes, and in particular, intentions. On his view, we commonly assume there is a distinctive action guiding principle of instrumental rationality because the agent’s attitudes will, by and large, be formally coherent *in so far as they are responsive to reasons*. In Kolodny’s own words ‘insofar as believers and intenders are sensitive to their reasons, their attitudes will, by and large, be formally coherent. This is what nourishes the myth. But this formal coherence among their attitudes will be just a by-product, or

epiphenomenon, of their sensitivity to reason. It will not be the result of any tendency to formal coherence as such.⁶³

Kolodny's account seems to manage to derive the "ought" of instrumental rationality from the "ought" of sufficient reasons for intending, as Schroeder seemed forced to do. And he seems to deal with the objection that the force of this "ought" ought to be able to move in more than one direction, as Schroeder seemed unable to do. On Kolodny's conception, the instrumental requirement is reduced to the *disjunction* of the following narrow scope requirements of sufficient reason: one ought to either not intend the end, when the reasons one believes one has for intending the end are not sufficient, *or* to intend the means, when the reasons one believes one has for intending the means are sufficient. This is possible because all the rational requirements ultimately reduce to the following two narrow scope rational requirements: the requirement to form the attitudes for which one believes one has sufficient reasons, and the requirement to not form the attitudes for which one believes one lacks sufficient reasons.⁶⁴

But also, *contra* the wide scope reading, on Kolodny's view, there is no special principle of coherence of intentions, giving rise to the "ought" of instrumental rationality. On his *transparency* account, the "ought" of instrumental rationality is nothing more than the expression of the "ought" of most or conclusive reason the way this appears from the perspective of the agent.⁶⁵ The requirement of instrumental rationality is no longer the requirement to be in a certain state, as the wide scope interpretation assumes. On Kolodny's view, it is the requirement

⁶³ Kolodny, 2008a, p. 390.

⁶⁴ Kolodny, 2005, p. 557.

⁶⁵ See Kolodny, 2005, p. 557. This is close to Schroeder's account of subjective reasons. But Kolodny himself objects to the reformulation of his view as the view that one is rationally required to do something in case one's beliefs about what she believes she has reason to do are true. See Kolodny 2005: footnote 47.

to go through a *particular* process each time: form a new intention or revise an existing one, depending on the balance of sufficient reason. Assume that one is in the state of conflict of intending an end and not intending the means, against the background of fixed beliefs about the means-end connection. If one believes one has more reason to intend the end rather than to not intend the means, one is “rationally required” to form the intention to take the means. If one believes one has more reason to not intend the means rather than to intend the end, one is “rationally required” to revise one’s intention for the end. If one believes one does not have sufficient reason to either form an intention for the end or an intention for the means, one is “rationally required” to form no intention at all. This is just to say that the requirement of instrumental rationality is reduced to one’s sensitivity to the patterns of sufficient reason. In the job candidate example, when the means to the agent’s end are unacceptable, and the agent knows it, Kolodny can say that the agent is “rationally required” to revise his intention for the end. The reason is that given that killing his competitors is unacceptable from his perspective, from his perspective he has more reason to drop his intention for the end rather than intend the means.

Thus Kolodny’s account manages to do two things. First, it makes room for the possibility of allowing thought concerning the means to influence thought about the end, as the objection from morality clearly requires. Second, it explains the possibility of a requirement to go through a *particular* process without yielding counterintuitive results, such as those yielded by the naïve narrow scope view. For the agent is “rationally required” to form an intention for the means *only if* she believes she has sufficient reason to intend the end. And she is “rationally required” to revise her intention for the end *only if* she believes she has sufficient reason to not intend the means.

Nevertheless, in discussing the objection from morality I argued that the trouble with the wide scope interpretation was not just that it could not explain the possibility of being required to go through a *particular* process as opposed to be in a certain state. The problem was that it could not explain the possibility of being required to go through the particular process of revising one's intention for the end *on the basis of consideration of an action as the means to one's end* (on a *de dicto* interpretation of 'the means to one's end'). The relevant question there was: why should the agent take into consideration the character of the means to one's end as such, in determining whether or not she ought to intend an end? On Kolodny's sophisticated skepticism, the answer is given by a principle of reason (and not rationality) like Raz's facilitative principle.⁶⁶ On this principle, "if there is *pro tanto* reason for one to E, then there is at least as much *pro tanto* reason for one to take some sufficient means to E."⁶⁷ Loosely stated this is a formulation of the thesis that one has reason to bring about whatever is of value, independently of whether it happens to be one of the agent's ends. Presumably then, if one has sufficient reason to not take some sufficient means to E, then given the principle this should signal that one does not have sufficient reason to E. For if there were sufficient reason to E, one would have at least as much *pro tanto* reason to take the means; so one would have sufficient reason to take the means. What it does not signal though is that in determining whether to intend E, the agent *ought* to think about whether there is sufficient reason to intend *what one takes to be the means to the end as such*.⁶⁸

As Raz himself suggests,

⁶⁶ See Raz, 2005.

⁶⁷ Kolodny 2008a, 366.

⁶⁸ To suggest this would in effect be to suggest that one has reason to follow the patterns of reasons, in something like the manner that Kolodny himself thinks the wide scope theorist ought to show that one has reason to follow the requirements of 'rationality', and that Kolodny himself argues against. See Kolodny 2005, esp. sections 2 and 3. But if it is hopeless to show that one has reason to follow the principle of rationality, it should be equally hopeless to show that one has reason to follow the patterns of reason.

...there is no distinctive set of deliberative standards that are involved in getting us to reason correctly from ends we have to means, and that are different from those that are involved in reasoning about which ends to have. Of course, there is a difference between facilitative reasons and others. Facilitative reasons have a special kind of dependence on source reasons. But that is a difference in the content of our deliberation, not in the standards that should govern the deliberative processes. They are the same when we try to determine our will to adopt, or maintain, or abandon some ends, as when we try to determine what facilitative steps to take in pursuit of goods we take ourselves to be pursuing as our ends. (Raz (2005) p. 26)

At best then, the principle of facilitative reason explains that there are some reasons that are facilitative *in content* in the same way that some tastes are musical. It explains that there are reasons that concern the connection between ends and actions that facilitate the pursuit of these ends. It explains, that is, why part of the reasons for intending an end *may* concern reasons for the means. What it does not explain is why in trying to figure out whether to intend an end, one *ought* to think about whether the means one takes to be the means to that end are means one ought to intend, on the *de dicto* interpretation of ‘the means to that end’. This is not to claim of course that there is any principle of rationality requiring an agent to think about the moral character of all the possible means to her end before intending that end. Nor is it to say that an agent is under the *strict* requirement to first confirm whether there are any morally acceptable means before intending an end and then intend the end.⁶⁹ It is to say that the awareness of the connection between a particular end and particular means to it activates “something like” the requirement to think about whether to intend the means in thinking about whether to intend the end. To think about whether it is acceptable to intend an end without thinking about whether it is acceptable to intend the necessary means to the end that the agent is aware of *as such*, is to think incorrectly.

⁶⁹ I thank Kieran Setiya for pressing me on this.

To explain this let me go back to the hero of the *Ax*. In such a case, it would be insufficient to *merely* say that if one thinks one ought to intend the end *while believing that the necessary means are unacceptable*, one's belief that one has sufficient reason to intend the end *is false*. For it is possible that in some of these cases one formed one's belief that one ought to intend the end without thinking about whether the means one was aware of as the only necessary means to one's end were acceptable or not. We should be able to say that if one comes to think one ought to intend the end *while believing* that the necessary means are unacceptable, one has formed one's belief that one ought to intend the end in the wrong way. At the very least, for instance, one has failed to meet the standards of how to properly form an intention for a morally acceptable end.⁷⁰ One's belief that one has sufficient reason to intend the end is formed badly; it is formed in abstraction from consideration of the character of the necessary means to the end. The mere fact that the insufficiency of reasons for intending means may signal the insufficiency of reasons for intending ends does not imply that *in* trying to determine whether to intend an end under the conditions specified above, one *ought* to consider the character of the means. The fact that the lack of sugar in the coffee may signal the fact that it will be undesirable now that I desire something sweet does not imply that in trying to determine whether coffee is desirable or not in the future I ought always to think about whether it contains enough sugar. In fact the facilitative principle cannot explain why it appears as if one ought to think of one's end in a means-end connection, when one is aware of it. It only explains why there are some reasons that are sensitive to this connection.

⁷⁰ As I said above, this means that in forming an intention for an end, to the degree that one ought to take the moral character of the end into consideration, to this extent one must always take into consideration the moral character of the means one takes to be the necessary means to that end.

In short, the error theory recommended by Kolodny and Raz – that we should explain away the appearance of a special principle of coherence by reference to a principle which explains why our attitudes tend to, by and large, be formally coherent⁷¹ – misses one important point: that the appearance to be explained away is not the appearance of a principle of formal coherence of attitudes. As the objection from morality shows, the principle we should explain away is this: that when deciding what to do or intend, one *ought to* think of the actions one is deliberating about as figuring in a means-end connection, provided one is aware of a relevant means-end connection. In the case of the objection from morality, the appearance is that one ought to think about whether one ought to intend the means one takes to be the only necessary means to one's end in considering whether to intend an end. The point of the objection from morality is that one ought not to determine whether one ought to intend an end in abstraction from the question of how the end figures in the means-end connection one is aware of. Therefore, one cannot say "I don't care about the character of the means I take to be necessary for my end at this stage; all I know is that I have sufficient reason to intend the end." This, I suggest, is what an ideal error theory should explain away: the appearance of a distinctive action guiding requirement to take the means to one's end as what explains why in intending an end one ought to think of the relevant action as figuring in a distinctive means-end connection, of which one is aware.

⁷¹ As Kolodny points out '...this formal coherence among their attitudes will be just a by-product, or epiphenomenon, of their sensitivity to reason. It will not be the result of any tendency to formal coherence as such.'(Kolodny 2008a: 391

1.6 AN ALTERNATIVE SUGGESTION: THE STRUCTURE-OF-INTENTION ERROR THEORY

I said above that Kolodny's error theory cannot explain away the appearance of a *special* sense in which one ought not to intend an end when one has sufficient reason to not intend the means. This is the sense in which one ought to *think* of one's action as figuring in the specific means-end connections of which one is aware.⁷² To perform this explanatory task, our ideal error theory must (1) preserve the distinction between thought of means and thought of ends, in the way that full-blown skepticism does not and (2) preserve some conception of the *actual* (and not just apparent from the agent's perspective) normative character of the connection between thoughts of ends and thoughts of means, in the way that Kolodny's error theory does not.

In this section I will suggest that what explains the appearance of a distinctive action guiding instrumental requirement is not the sensitivity of our capacity to form intentions to *patterns* of reason, but the *structure* of intention itself. To lay out this error theory I will start with a preliminary remark on how we should understand talk of the structure of intention. Against the standard approach on which the genus of intention is a propositional attitude, I will suggest, following Michael Thompson,⁷³ that the genus of intention is the distinctive form of an event or process. The genus of intention, I shall claim, is determined by the fact that it spans the present and reaches out to the future in the way of an event; such that a tree may be falling without yet having fallen. The differentia of intention is that its phases are unified under a rationalizing

⁷² This awareness is of one piece with Anscombe's sense of knowing what one is doing without observation, but it does not matter so much exactly what type of awareness this is. (See Anscombe 1957)

⁷³ See Thompson, 2008.

order of means-end descriptions; such that one may be cutting basil *because* one is making pesto without yet having made pesto. Put more formally my claim is that:

The Structure-of-Intention Error Theory: It appears that there is a distinctive, action-guiding requirement that one ought to think about whether to intend an action *x* qua the only necessary means to one's end, in thinking about whether to intend a distinct action *y* qua one's end, because the elementary structure of intentional action is the rationalizing order of means-end descriptions of a process.

This claim is bound to sound puzzling if we assume that intention is a propositional attitude, which is of the same genus as appetite, wish, hope, fear, etc.. The elementary structure of intention is commonly conceived of as the composite of a distinctive propositional attitude and a state of affairs or a proposition which is its object. In this case the task is to explain why thought of whether to form this distinctive propositional attitude towards a particular action *A* *ought* to involve thought of whether to form this distinctive propositional attitude towards a different action *B*. This is to say that we need to explain the particular actions *A* and *B* as falling under more general specifications (e.g. descriptions as *means* and *ends*) such that we can then formulate principles about the necessary connections of these more general specifications. The existence of an irreducible (narrow or wide scope) instrumental requirement was postulated in order to explain *just* one such connection. Therefore, to say now that what explains the appearance of this requirement is this very connection is either to say something trivial or to say something viciously circular.

The main claim of a *Structure-of-Intention Error Theory* will both be substantial and non-circular if we make room for an alternative conception of the structure of intention. One good place to start is Donald Hubin's unsuccessful defense of instrumentalism. In his paper, "What's

Special about Humeanism,”⁷⁴ he tries to save the simple narrow scope reading of the instrumental requirement. He argues that a fuller and more accurate description of the end one intends should involve mention of the means by which one intends to achieve the end. On his picture, simply saying that one intends to get the job is an elliptic way of saying that one intends to-get-the-job-by-doing-the-things-one-typically-does-when-one-wants-to-get-a-job. When one realizes that the only way to get the job is to kill one’s competitors, one realizes that getting-the-job-by-killing-one’s-competitors is *not* what one intends when one intends to get the job. For killing one’s competitors is not one of the typical things one does to get a job. On this account, intending the end of getting a job puts one under no rational pressure to take the means of killing one’s competitors. The reason is that to intend an end just is to-intend-an-end-by-taking-the-means-to-it, and in this case killing one’s competitors is not part of the means one intends to take in order to achieve one’s end. The simple narrow scope requirement then to take the means to one’s end does not yield counter-intuitive consequences, such as the consequence that if one happens to intend an end one is under rational pressure to take the means even if they are entirely unacceptable.

But this account cannot be a simple narrow scope account. It cannot explain how the requirement to take the means may nevertheless be generated from the requirement to intend the end. If one has a reason to bring-about-one’s-end-by-taking-the-means then it of course follows logically that one has a reason to take the means. But this logical implication cannot be the sense in which, on the narrow scope reading, reasons to intend ends generate reasons to intend means or are transmitted to the intentions for means. For on the narrow scope reading, reasons for intending the means are not merely logically derived from reasons for the ends, but *generated* or

⁷⁴ Hubin, 1999.

transmitted from them. The reason Hubin fails to see the problem is that he has a very permissive picture of the fundamental commitments of instrumentalism. In the beginning of his discussion of instrumentalism in his “What’s Special about Humeanism” he says: “The thesis of pure instrumentalism holds that reasons are communicated from ends to means – that he who has a reason for the ends has also a reason for the means.”⁷⁵ This equation is mistaken. To say that reasons are communicated from ends to means is not merely to say that he who has a reason for the end *also* has a reason for the means. It is to say that he has a reason to take the means *because* he intends the end. The claim that he who has a reason for the ends also has a reason for the means is a claim that even a radical skeptic like Finlay could accept. For if to intend an end just is to intend the means to it, it will be true that if one intends an end for a reason, then “he who has a reason for the end also has a reason for the means.”

Even though Hubin’s account fails as a narrow scope account, we can nevertheless get a valuable hint for the development of our error theory. The structure along which the apparently “instrumental” normative force moves is not the structure of a nexus of distinct intentions towards states of affairs or propositions, as both the narrow and the wide scope accounts assume. It is the structure of the connection of means-end thoughts which is intra-intentional. I will argue now that if this structure is merely taken to be the structure of the *content of a propositional attitude*, it will not be able to ground the normative connection between means and end descriptions, or thoughts.

⁷⁵ See Hubin, 1999, p. 32.

In her article “Reasons for Action”⁷⁶ Korsgaard also suggests that the object of an intention (“choice” in her terminology) is an “action”: a complex composed out of an “act” and its “purpose”. An act is, for Korsgaard, the doing which is the means to one’s end and an action is the whole which is composed out of the act and the purpose for which it is performed. When an agent chooses in Korsgaard’s terms to do *this*, she chooses *to-do-this-act-for-the-sake-of-this-end*. To use some of Korsgaard’s examples, to say that Jack chooses to go to Chicago is an elliptical way of saying that he chooses to-go-to-Chicago-to-see-his-mother, or chooses to-go-to-Chicago-for-the-sake-of-seeing-his-mother. To say that the soldier chooses to sacrifice himself is an elliptical way of saying that he chooses to-sacrifice-himself-to-secure-a-victory-for-his-city, or to-sacrifice-himself-for-the-sake-of-securing-a-victory-for-his-city.

But this is not the end of the story, for we can now ask for the reason for the whole action. Jack may choose the former “action” as profitable (he may e.g. expect to get cash from his mother) and the warrior may choose the latter “action” as noble (he may live in pre-capitalistic times). In this case, “‘Noble’ describes the kind of value that the whole package has, the value that he sees in it when he chooses it”.⁷⁷ This, Korsgaard claims, is the proper use of the term “reason.” In contrast, what people *usually* ask for, when they ask for the reason for which an action is performed is the *purpose* of the “act”. The purpose of an “act” is separate from and behind the act, whereas the reason for his “action” is not separate from the “action.” For, in Korsgaard’s words:

Giving a description or explication of the action and giving a description or explication of the reason is the same thing. The *logos* or maxim that expresses the reason is a kind of description of the action, and could be cited in response to the question: *what is he doing?*

⁷⁶ Korsgaard, 2008.

⁷⁷ Korsgaard 2009, p. 10.

just as easily as it can in response to the question *why is he doing that?* Indeed—to make one last appeal to our ordinary practices—their view explains why in ordinary language these questions are pretty much equivalent. For the demand for justification can as easily take the form: *what are you doing?* or more aggressively and skeptically *what do you think you are doing?* as it can *why are you doing that?* The reason for an action is not something that stands behind it and makes you want to do it: it is the action itself, described in a way that makes it intelligible.⁷⁸

The reason for an “action” is thus the account, or the story which spells out the act-for-the-sake-of-an-end whole in a way that makes it intelligible as worth pursuing in *some* sense. In what follows I will be calling “intending” what Korsgaard calls “choosing”, and what Korsgaard calls “a reason for an action,” I will later on be calling “the guise of the intention”. A *first* stab at getting to the picture of intention I’m proposing in this chapter is to say that intention is not an attitude towards a mere “act,”⁷⁹ but the description of a whole “action” as an intelligible object. This description appears to have the following structure: (1) it is a complex composed out of an “act” and a “purpose” component; it is a to-do-this-for-the-sake-of-this-end, or to-do-this-in-order-to-achieve-this-end,⁸⁰ and (2) it is held together by what Aristotle would call a *logos*, or Kant a *maxim*: a description which makes it (the whole “action”) intelligible as worth pursuing *under some light*.

This much, though, is not sufficient to generate a convincing error theory of the sort I’m envisaging. The following objection makes this obvious. Korsgaard may be right that we rarely

⁷⁸ Korsgaard, 2008, p. 227. She expresses the same thought when she says that “an action is an essentially intelligible object that embodies a reason, the way a sentence is an essentially intelligible object that embodies a thought.” (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 14)

⁷⁹ I will qualify this description of the view I’m suggesting later on.

⁸⁰ On the view I will go on to propose there is no such thing as a basic action: an action which is not performed by performing another action. I will briefly go into this later, but for now it is worth noting that by the lights of Korsgaard’s definition alone, basic action in this sense is perfectly possible. There is nothing so far to block the possibility of doing-x-for-the-sake-of-doing-y without doing-z-for-the-sake-of-doing-x. And so it may make sense to say that doing-x-for-the-sake-of-doing-y may be performed without performing another action. The “act” component of an action need not, on Korsgaard’s picture, constitute the “purpose” component of another action. This I will urge in what follows is what is wrong with Korsgaard’s account.

just intend to do something without giving any thought whatsoever to what we want it for, or what we will thereby achieve, or even how it fits in with our other intentions and plans.⁸¹ But, contrary to what Korsgaard has to say, we often just do things without doing them *for the sake of* anything else. Korsgaard attempts to answer just this objection by suggesting that even when we do *not* do things for the sake of doing other things we may be doing them for their own sake; we may for instance be dancing-just-for-the-sake-of-dancing.⁸² But as Anscombe points out, the question *Why*, the applicability of which determines when an action is intentional, “is not refused application because the answer to it says that there is no reason [“purpose” in Korsgaard’s terms], any more than the question how much money I have in my pocket is refused application by the answer ‘None’”.⁸³ Imagine I am tapping my fingers rhythmically on the table during a boring talk. Are we always willing to say that I intend to-tap-my-fingers-rhythmically-for-the-sake-of-tapping-them, or that I intend to-tap-my-fingers-rhythmically-for-the-sheer-joy-of-doing-so, or that I intend to-tap-my-fingers-rhythmically-to-entertain-myself, etc.? There surely are descriptions of cases in which I’m not tapping my fingers for the sake of anything else. But, Korsgaard may respond, these would be cases of intentional action which lie on the periphery of intentionality. Why should we bother?

We should bother because Korsgaard’s account can only explain the normativity of the connection between the thought of means and the thought of ends by reverting to the *specific* interpretation of the “for-the-sake-of” part of the action. But this material, i.e. the *specific* light in which a means-end connection is thought (e.g. the light of avarice in the case of the avaricious son who intends to go-to-Chicago-to-visit-his-mother, and the light of nobility in the case of the

⁸¹ For an account of intention which builds on just this characteristic see Bratman, 1987, 1999.

⁸² See Korsgaard 2008, p. 219.

⁸³ Anscombe 1957, paragraph 17.

warrior) is not what makes an action intentional. The soldier's nobility for instance is not what makes his action intentional. In this case the *specific* interpretation of the "for the sake of" part of the action is not part of the elementary structure of intention, and our error theory cannot be based on the structure of intention, as I said I think it should be. For the structure of intention alone to provide the basis for our ideal error theory we need to explain how the description of the connection as a means-end connection has a normative force of its own, independently of the *specific* light in which the connection is thought. To manage this, I will go on to show, we need to understand the structure of intention as something other than the structure of the content of the proposition, which is the object of a distinctive propositional attitude. Instead, we need to understand the structure of intention as the structure of a distinctive form of event or process.

The first step to get to this account is to explain how the means-end connection *itself* – independently of the particular light in which it is thought – may be normative, in a way that explains away the appearance of the imperatival "ought." G. E. M. Anscombe departs from Korsgaard's account in attempting to give just that: an interpretation of the *generic* normative connection between means and end descriptions, which constitutes the structure of intention.⁸⁴ *Intention in acting* is for Anscombe given by what she calls "a series of means end thoughts." "Why are you moving your arm up and down? – To pump the water. – Why are you pumping the water? – To poison the inhabitants, etc.', is Anscombe's infamous example for the kind of exchange which defines a series of means end thoughts. The series is this: "I'm moving my arm up and down in order to pump the water, I'm pumping the water in order to poison the inhabitants, etc." Its form is this: "I am doing x in order to do y, I am doing y in order to do z,

⁸⁴ See Anscombe 1957.

etc.” And it is determined as a distinctive form of thought by the fact that a certain sense⁸⁵ of the question *Why* is applicable to *all* these descriptions (moving my hand up and down, pumping water, poisoning the inhabitants, etc.).⁸⁶ The last term in this series of means-end thoughts is what Anscombe calls an “intention in acting;” this is what Korsgaard calls a “reason for an action,” and what I will later on call “the guise of an intention.” This is the *specific*⁸⁷ way in which the means-end descriptions are thought together in the means-end syntheses. Each such way reflects either one of the most general concerns of the agent or the most general concern of the agent.⁸⁸

To go back to the point I made against Korsgaard above, her account does not suffice to give us the kind of error theory we need. This is because she assumes that the only normativity that can exist in a means-end structure is the normativity of the last term in the series, in Anscombe’s words. But what is distinctive of Anscombe’s account is that an action description should count both as the description of the means to an end (or an act, in Korsgaard’s terminology), and the description of an end (or a purpose, in Korsgaard’s terminology). On her view, what qualifies each of the above descriptions (pumping the water, poisoning the inhabitants, etc.) as *action* descriptions is not just that they find their place in an etiological structure of the form to-do-x-for-the-sake-of-doing-y, as Korsgaard assumes. What qualifies them as action descriptions is

⁸⁵ This sense is specified by Anscombe throughout the first half of *Intention*. This is the sense Davidson captures by talking of “the rationalization of an action.” (Davidson, 1963) Roughly speaking, what holds these action descriptions together is the fact that in them a certain reason giving structure is actualized. For a very detailed explication of this see Thompson 2008, chapter 7 and esp. p. 112. But I will come back to Thompson soon.

⁸⁶ See for instance Anscombe, 1957, paragraph 23.

⁸⁷ It will transpire later on that the guise of an intention is determined by the requirements of non-instrumental practical rationality. Exactly what these requirements are, and so what *specifies* the guise of intention, will depend on our preferred theory of practical rationality.

⁸⁸ This will depend on whether our preferred theory of practical rationality is monolithic or multi-dimensional. I should also note here that this specific each time way is for Anscombe that *in virtue of which* all the means and end descriptions of the series, i.e. x, y, z, etc. count as descriptions of *one* particular action.

that it is in their essence to be describable as both the means to an end and an end. *Pumping the water* in Anscombe's example is both the answer to the question *Why are you moving your arm up and down?*, and itself the subject matter of the further question *Why are you pumping the water?* In other words, pumping the water is both the end of moving one's arm up and down, and the means of poisoning the inhabitants. Similarly, moving one's arm up and down is both the means of pumping the water, and itself the end of, say, moving one's arm from point A to point B (where, for instance, moving one's arm from point A to point C is what it is to move one's arm up and down, and B is between A and C). If what makes an action description an action description is the fact that it can be both the ground and the grounded in a series of means-end thoughts, then it would be weird, to say the least, to suggest, as Korsgaard does, that the purpose of an act is *separate from* and *behind* the act.

In fact, this view of the end or "purpose" of an action as *separate* is exactly the kind of picture Thompson warns us against in his "Naïve Theory of Action."⁸⁹ There, Thompson argues that to appreciate the structure of intentional action we need to realize that what he calls *the naïve rationalization of action* is the primary form of action rationalization. The naïve rationalization is manifested in reason giving exchanges of the form: *Why are you moving your arm up and down? – I'm pumping the water; Why are you pumping the water? – I'm poisoning the inhabitants; etc.* For Thompson, it is possible to answer these *Why* questions with answers such as "Because *I want to poison* the inhabitants," or "*In order to* poison the inhabitants," etc., only because it is possible to answer them "naïvely" by saying "*I'm poisoning* the inhabitants." I said above that on Korsgaard's view, what intentional action embodies is the "reason for the action." On Thompson's picture, intentional action does not just embody the specific light in

⁸⁹ In Thompson 2008.

which the means-end synthesis is made intelligible; the “reason of the action” in Korsgaard’s words, or the “final term of the series” in Anscombe’s words. Intentional action also embodies what Anscombe calls the form of rationalization itself: the *series* of means-end thoughts. Thus, Thompson explains the elementary structure of intention as a certain synthesis of means-end descriptions. In this synthesis the action description as an end is not *separate from* and *behind* the action description as a means, but is united with it in the peculiar synthesis exhibited in a naïve rationalization.⁹⁰ Let me explain this some more.

In Anscombe’s example, the peculiar synthesis is exhibited in the rationalization according to which *the man is pumping the water because he is poisoning the inhabitants*. Poisoning the inhabitants is not behind and separate from the action of pumping the water. To deny this on the grounds of cases in which one fails to poison the inhabitants is to merely assume that one cannot *be doing* something even though one has not yet *done* it, or may never actually *do* it. That I’m walking to school, as Thompson stresses, does not of course imply that I have walked to school.

⁹⁰ “The nature of intentional action, or the kind of being-subject-of-an-event that characterizes a rational agent and a person, resides in the peculiar “synthesis” that unites the various parts and phases of something like house-building, for example, mixing mortar, laying bricks, hammering nails, etc. This synthesis is rendered explicit in naïve rationalization, which brings them successively to the one formula ‘I’m building a house’. But the synthesis can be exhibited, I will suggest, even in the moving of a finger.” (Thompson 2008, p. 91) On this view of course, there cannot be any basic intentional actions, in the sense of an action which is performed without performing any other action. In fact, one of Thompson’s initial definitions of intentional action is that “X’s doing A is an intentional action (proper) under that description just in case the agent can be said, truly, to have done something else *because he or she was doing A*.” (Thompson 2008, p. 112) I have no space here to argue explicitly for the impossibility of basic action, since it is not my purpose here to *defend* Thompson’s view of intention so much as to show that it helps us build an adequate error theory of the instrumental principle of rationality. All I should note for now is that the rejection of the possibility of basic intentional action on Thompson’s part is not to deny the commonsensical claim that we do not perform all of our actions as *instruments* for performing other actions; in the way for instance of someone who is being nice to someone else *so as to* earn their favor. Instead, Thompson’s rejection of the possibility of basic intentional action is his denial of the not so commonsensical thought that a *certain* bit of behavior becomes intentional “by its being caught up in a rationalizing order” (Thompson 2008, p. 112). For, to identify an intentional action as basic is to identify exactly *that* bit of behavior in the rationalizing order which became intentional by *entering* the rationalizing order. But if “rather, the rationalizing order, that peculiar etiological structure, is inscribed within every intentional action proper” (Thompson 2008, p. 112), then to want to identify an intentional action as basic is either to want to point to the commonsensical thought above, or to want to sustain a mythical conception of action.

That I did not walk to school does not imply that I was not walking to school either. So it *may* be true to say that *I'm pumping water because I'm poisoning the inhabitants*, even if no-one has yet been poisoned or no-one will be poisoned because the plan will fail.⁹¹ For the truth of the etiological relation in the imperfective⁹² (I am pumping the water because I'm poison-*ing* the inhabitants) does not imply the truth of the perfective (I poison-*ed* the inhabitants) even though the latter implies the former.

In fact, as Thompson claims, the kind of explanation of action which is peculiar to action theory is the kind of explanation which locates action in what might be called a developing process.⁹³ To explain an action as intentional is to provide the *particular etiological* relation (e.g. I am breaking the eggs *because* I'm making an omelet) of happenings (e.g. breaking eggs, heating the oil in the pan, etc.) to an *imperfectively present overarching process* (e.g. omelet-making).⁹⁴ It is not, as Korsgaard assumes, to place a piece of behavior in a rationalizing connection (e.g. to put a "this" in a "to-do-this-for-the-sake-of-an-end structure"). It is to explain how the action itself *constitutes* a distinctive unfolding or process. As Thompson characteristically puts it, 'Any intentional action (proper) figures in a space of reasons as a region, not as a point; or, equivalently, each of them, whether hand-raising or house-building, is itself such a space.'⁹⁵

⁹¹ For this to be true it doesn't have to be the case that the naïve rationalization is true no matter what is going on in the world. In other words, that there is *some* failure of getting y done, which makes it the case that one is *not* doing-x-because-one-is-doing-y, does not mean that all failure of getting y done falsifies the naïve rationalization. For the point that I see Thompson as making it suffices to say that there is some failure of achievement that does not falsify the naïve rationalization in a way that makes room for a special normative relation, as I will point out in what follows in the chapter.

⁹² The imperfective, e.g. *poisoning*, is that which describes the event in its unfolding and the perfective, e.g. *poisoned*, that which describes the events as "unfurled or finished or whole." (See Thompson 2008, 131)

⁹³ See Thompson 2008, p. 132.

⁹⁴ See Thompson 2008, p. 132-133.

⁹⁵ See Thompson 2008, p. 112.

But if the end of the means is not separate from and behind the means, then we do not have to look to what Anscombe calls “the final term in the series of rationalizations,” in order to establish that there is a normative relation between the means and end descriptions. In fact, we can now claim, it is the nature of event forms or processes as such which guarantees that there is a normative relation between the means and the end description of an action. For now the following possibility arises: an agent may *be pumping water because he is poisoning the inhabitants* even though he may be (under certain circumstances) *failing* to be poisoning the inhabitants - in the sense that one has *failed* to poison the inhabitants when one has not yet *poisoned* them or will never actually get them *poisoned*. He *may* still count as ‘pumping the water because he is poisoning the inhabitants’, because the truth of this imperfective rationalization does not imply the truth of the perfective that the agent *poisoned* the inhabitants. This is the only sense in which the end of an action is both constitutive and normative for an action.

The account proposed here will not exclude cases where we seem hard pressed to think for “the sake of what” we are performing an intentional action, such as doodling or tapping our fingers on the table. For even when I’m tapping, my tapping can be conceived of as the normative unity of phases such as taking my hands out of my pocket, placing them on the table, moving the index first, then moving the middle finger, etc., such that in doing each one of these things because I’m doing the other, I may be failing to *do* the other.⁹⁶ This is how we get an error theory which is based solely on the elementary structure of intention. This error theory can explain away the appearance of a distinctive, action-guiding requirement of instrumental rationality. Let me spell out how.

⁹⁶ For a detailed argument for this view see Thompson 2008, chapter 7.

At the end of the last section I said that this action-guiding requirement is posited to explain why it is that we ought not to determine whether or not to intend an end in abstraction from how it figures in the means-end connection of which we are aware. But no interpretation of the requirement could avoid yielding counter-intuitive results, and Kolodny's and Raz's *error* theory of reason could not fully explain it away. So, I suggested that we should follow Thompson in conceiving of the elementary structure of intention *as the rationalizing order which connects happenings with an overarching imperfectively present process by naïve rationalizations of the form "I'm doing A because I'm doing B."* On this view, to intend an action as an end just is to locate a *distinctive* (it doesn't matter which exactly) *imperfective* rationalizing means-end order in an action; whereas to consider an end in isolation from this means-end structure is to take it out of this order and so to strip it of its character as an end. This explains why it seems that an agent *ought to* think of her action as figuring in a means-end connection.⁹⁷ It *appears* that this "ought" should be explained in terms of the possibility of a distinctive rational failure, because a distinctive failure is indeed possible. This is not the failure to conform to a distinctive action guiding, i.e. instrumental, requirement of practical rationality; it is the failure to do B, when one is doing A because one is doing B. It *appears*, then, that there is a distinctive requirement of rationality we can fail to conform to, because we can fail to be doing A because we are doing B – even though we may be indeed doing A because we are doing B – in the way of someone who has failed to do B when one has not done B.⁹⁸

I suggested above that intention just *is* the distinctive (i.e. etiological) representation under which the imperfective forms of means and ends descriptions are thought together in acting. If

⁹⁷ This is part of what Anscombe means when she says that the agent must be able to answer the *Why* question even if her answer is "For no reason".

⁹⁸ For what I take to be a similar suggestion see Lavin, 2004.

this is true, there can be no issue of either *transmission* of reason-hood from one attitude to another (as on the narrow scope reading) or of *coherence* between types of attitudes (as on the wide scope reading). Instrumental normativity will not constitute the rationality of our attitudes but the normativity of a distinctive kind of etiological form of events: intention.

But one may raise the following objection. I may have managed to come up with a story about instrumental normativity which explains why it *appears* that what is required on the part of the agent is the thought of an action as figuring in a means-end order (and not in isolation from it). But I have avoided dealing with the puzzling intuitions that the narrow and wide scope theorists try to explain. Do I have something helpful to say about these puzzling intuitions? In particular, why do we think it appropriate to sometimes say that, if an agent intends an action, then she ought to take the means, and some other times say that if she intends an action, she ought to either intend the means or revise the end? What explains this divergence? Nothing in the elementary structure of intentional action, I want to respond. What explains this divergence in our judgment is a function of the different each time “guise of one’s intention:” i.e. the different character of the last term in the series of the rationalizing order one identifies in one’s action, in Anscombe’s words, or the different (*individual*) *determination* of the thought of means-end descriptions in a means-end synthesis.

Assume, for instance, that this character is determined by thought of moral value, whatever that is exactly. In other words, assume that doing y as the means has been thought together with doing x as the end under the guise of what is judged as, e.g., the honest thing to do. In this case, one is under the unconditional practical requirement to do y. This is no more than the moral requirement, whatever its exact nature. If, on the other hand, doing y has been thought together

with doing x as what appears pleasant, then one is under the conditional requirement to do y. Assume, for instance, that one thinks of going to the shop together with buying chocolate under the guise of pleasure (i.e. of the last term in the rationalizing instrumental order is some description of the sort “to enjoy myself”). And one realizes that the only way to do so is to steal a car. Then from the perspective of pleasure, one is subject to a conditional requirement: one can satisfy the requirement one is under *either* by stealing the car *or* by putting down the desire to buy chocolate. From the perspective of moral value, the requirement one is subject to is unconditional: one has to satisfy it by not stealing the car. So, if one steals the car one may manage to satisfy the conditional requirement of pleasure but not the unconditional requirement of morality. If one does not steal the car but does not put down one’s desire for chocolate, one may manage to satisfy the unconditional requirement of morality but not the conditional requirement of pleasure. If, again, one does not steal the car but quiets down one’s desire then one may manage to satisfy both, etc.

Ultimately, the reason why both the wide scope and the narrow scope interpretations fail is that (a) they have confused non-instrumental requirements, such as the above requirements of morality and pleasure, with manifestations of instrumental normativity, and (b) they have failed to appreciate that if it makes any sense to talk of a *specifically* instrumental requirement, this is the sense in which the structure of intention itself as the distinctive form of an event consists in an instrumental, normative order; not the sense in which one is required to form an attitude towards this or that proposition. Kolodny’s error theory is inadequate, because even though he has appreciated the truth of the first diagnostic claim, he has not appreciated the truth of the second.

1.7 CONCLUSION: BACK TO THE DBT AGAIN

I said above that the guise of one's intention is the (*individual*) *determination* of the way the means-end descriptions are thought together in the means-end syntheses by different requirements. And I suggested that this guise is what explains why we sometimes think that one is under the *unconditional* requirement to perform an action that is described as the means to an end, and why we sometimes think that one is under the *conditional* requirement to perform an action that is described as the means to an end. I gave two examples to spell out this divergence in our judgment. In the first example I postulated that the connection between imperfective ends- and means- action descriptions was effected under the guise of moral value. In other words, that the last term of the rationalizing order of imperfective ends- and means-descriptions was a description pertaining to what is morally valuable. In the second example I postulated that the connection between imperfective ends- and means-descriptions was effected under the guise of appetite, or what appears pleasant. In other words, that the last term of the rationalizing order was a description pertaining to what is or appears pleasant.

Now in this chapter I argued that the DBT – the views on which action motivation is explained as such only if it is revealed as being subject to the instrumental requirement to take the means to one's end and the source of the normative force of this requirement is a desire for the end – fail because they fall under a genus of theories of rationality that fail. I took this genus to be the genus of instrumentalism: the family of views on which (1) action motivation is explained as such only if it is revealed as being subject to the instrumental requirement to take the means to one's end, and (2) the source of the normative force of this requirement is taken to lie in the agent's propositional attitude (intention broadly speaking) towards the end. I argued that instrumentalist theories fail to do justice to our intuitions concerning the apparent

requirement to think of our actions as figuring in means-end connections. Eventually I argued for an alternative conception of instrumental normativity based on a different understanding of the structure of intention. On this understanding, intention is not a propositional attitude but the *distinctive* form of an event or process: the rationalizing order of means-end descriptions of actions, which may take a different character depending on the nature of the last term in the order.

If I'm right, and the DBT fail because there is no irreducible, action-guiding requirement of instrumental rationality, this is not bad news for all normativist theories of action motivation which attempt to ground motivation in the normative control of desire. For these theories may assume that desire is the ground of the normativity of motivation in the sense that desire is the only thing that determines the "guise of intention." In other words, in the sense that desire *as such* or a *specific* desire is the only source of (*individual*) *determination* of the way in which means-end descriptions are thought together in means-end syntheses.

To return to Anscombe's "mud" example, it makes sense to say that I desire to get a saucer of mud when "getting a saucer of mud" figures in my thought of what I desire to do as a means-to-an-end which makes sense in the light of desire; as for instance getting-a-saucer-of-mud-because-I-am-fighting-a-mud-fight, which makes sense in the light of my desire for play. It is true that it sounds weird to merely say "I want a saucer of mud" when it does not sound weird to merely say "I want a plate of food." This is because in the latter case but not in the former it is easy to imagine what the means-end rationalizing order is which may be the object of motivation and which may be thought under the guise of desire. This is how we can both understand Anscombe's claim and do justice to Dennis Stampe's thought that when desire moves us, it moves us with a certain right. To say of desire that it is the only source of the guise of intention

is to say the following: that desire is the *sole* ground of the practical norms to which action motivation is subject. And this is to give a desire based theory of the normativity of motivation, which evades the criticism I ventured against the specific variety of Desired Based Theories in this chapter. To argue against the emerging desire based theories, we need a different argument: one that I will give in the next chapter.

2. PRIMARY MOTIVATIONAL CONFLICT AND MONOLITHIC THEORIES OF ACTION MOTIVATION

2.1 INTRODUCTION

2.1.1 Preview of the Argument

In the first chapter of this dissertation I argued against the view that to explain intentional action as such is to reveal it to be subject to a distinctive, action-guiding requirement of instrumental rationality. I argued that intention does not guide intentional action as a means to an end. Therefore to explain intentional action *as such* cannot be to reveal it to be subject to the normative authority of a propositional attitude towards an end that will thereby be served. The truth, I suggested, is that there is no distinctive action-guiding instrumental requirement at all. What explains the *appearance* that there is such a requirement is the elementary structure of intentional action conceived of as the structure of a distinctive form of event and not the structure of a propositional attitude. In particular, what explains this appearance is the fact that a certain instrumental, rationalizing order is internal to the structure of intentional action.

But, as I pointed out at the end of the first chapter, we can nevertheless take desire to be the ground of action motivation, in a broadly neo-Humean manner. This is possible because there

are two distinct ways in which intentional action might be subject to normative standards. On the first, the normative standards are non-practical in the sense that they do not guide us in choosing an action. And they are internal to the instrumental order *as such* (*so that in doing A to do B one may succeed in doing B or fail to do B*). On the second, the normative standards are practical in the sense that they guide us in choosing an action. They are internal to the relation between the means-end synthesis which is the action and the non-instrumental practical requirement(s) which determine(s) its guise (*so that in doing A because one is doing B one may be succeeding in doing or failing to be doing what one is required to do.*)

The guise of the means-end synthesis is what I called in the previous chapter the “guise of intention.”⁹⁹ And I said that this is the (*individual*) *determination* of the way in which the means-end descriptions are thought together in the means-end syntheses, and each such way reflects the most general concern or one of the most general concerns of the agent. I can say now that the guise of intention (or action motivation) is the (*individual*) *determination* of the way means-end descriptions are thought together in a means-end synthesis by a non-instrumental practical requirement. For instance Jack may be motivated to drive to Chicago to see his dying mother *out of love*, or *out of a sense of duty* or *out of avarice*, etc. It may be the case, that is, that going to Chicago and seeing his dying mother are represented together by the agent as what constitutes loving someone, or what it is to discharge one’s duty as a son, or what brings about the desired inheritance, etc. In all these cases, Jack would count as going-to-Chicago-because-he-is-seeing-his-dying-mother; i.e. as doing something with the elementary structure of an intentional action. The guise of this structure would in each case be different. Whether this

⁹⁹ This is close in spirit to what Anscombe called “the last term in the rationalizing series” and Korsgaard “the reason for the whole action.” See Anscombe, 1957; Korsgaard, 2008, 2009.

guise is ultimately constituted as such by a normatively authoritative desire, concept, judgment, belief, form of thought, etc. will depend, as we will see, on the details of each theory of practical rationality. In this chapter I will examine the *monolithic* family of views on which the guise of intention is ultimately constituted by a *single* commensurable requirement. And I will argue against these theories on the basis of considerations about action motivation: that activation of psychic structures which issues in intentional action.

Thus, even if action motivation is not subject to the normative control of a propositional attitude towards the action as a means, it may nevertheless be subject to the non-instrumental, normative control of desire. For (a specific) desire may be what one is required to satisfy or approximate or aim at in order to count as non-instrumentally practically rational.¹⁰⁰ In other words, (a specific) desire may constitute the guise of intentional action. This would preserve a broadly Humean narrative about the constitution of intentional action. This understanding, on which there are two distinct ways in which action motivation and intentional action may be subject to normative standards, makes room for a Rationalist alternative, as well. According to the Rationalist family of theories, the guise of intention will constitute either the accordance of intention with judgments about one's reasons (what I shall be calling "practical judgments" from now on), or an instance of the activity of sound practical reasoning. In either case, to explain intentional action as such is not to explain it to be or fail to be as it ought to be from the perspective of a distinctive, action-guiding requirement of instrumental rationality. It is to either reveal it to have the elementary normative structure of intentional action, or to reveal *this* instrumental structure to be subject to non-instrumental practical requirements.

¹⁰⁰ From now on I will refer to non-instrumental practical rationality as "practical rationality."

In this chapter I will argue that certain considerations about our motivational life have an important consequence if combined with the Thompsonian picture of *the elementary structure of intentional action*. The fundamental premise of these considerations is the platitude that there are two kinds of motivational conflict: derivative and primary motivational conflict. Roughly speaking, derivative motivational conflict is conflict between two motivations with regard to two different actions, which happen to be jointly unrealizable, and primary motivational conflict is conflict with regard to one and the same action at the same time. The consequence of the proper consideration of this platitude is that there cannot be a single commensurable source of the practical standards to which action motivation is subject; in other words, that the standards of practical rationality must issue from incommensurable practical requirements. If action motivation must be subject to incommensurable practical requirements, then the means-end synthesis which is the intentional action cannot take a single guise; i.e. it must be determined by incommensurable practical requirements. I will call any theory which assumes that action motivation, and hence intentional action must be subject to a single (commensurable) requirement of practical rationality *monolithic*. And I will argue that no monolithic theory can account for the possibility of primary motivational conflict.

In what follows, I shall argue that both Humean and Rationalist monolithic theories fail to make room for the possibility of contrary motivations towards one and the same action at the same time. To see this we have to keep before our eyes the conception of action as a means-end synthesis in the way presented in the previous chapter. In the rest of this introduction I will trace the roots of this argument to Plato's *Republic*, and defend the intuitiveness of the distinction between primary and derivative motivational conflict. In the second section of this chapter I will distinguish between Humean, or Motivation-first, and Rationalist, or Rationality-first, monolithic

theories of action motivation and intentional action.¹⁰¹ In the third and fourth section I will argue that neither the Humean nor the rationalist theories can make room for primary motivational opposition. In the fifth section I will propose an alternative: we can understand the guise of the instrumental order inscribed in intentional action, and hence action motivation, as being determined by incommensurable requirements of practical rationality. We can, that is, allow for a multi-dimensional account of intentional action and action motivation.¹⁰²

In the final chapter of this dissertation I will investigate several multi-dimensional accounts. I will argue that to make sense of choice in the face of conflict between incommensurable requirements of practical rationality, we need to conceive of the incommensurable guises of means-end syntheses as taking a single form: the form of practical knowledge. This is knowledge of oneself as determined in her reasoning by the right practical requirement for the circumstances.

2.1.2 *Plato's Argument from Conflict for the Division of the Soul*

The suggestion that a distinctive type of motivational conflict is philosophically important is not new. Plato, in the fourth book of the *Republic*, took a distinctive sort of motivational conflict specified as such by the so-called principle of opposites to entail the division of the soul.¹⁰³ The appearance with which Plato's argument starts is the appearance of a certain reflexive type of conflict. The example he gives is of a thirsty man who may both yearn for a drink, and thus be moved towards it, and be pulled back from it by something which forbids him to do so. Then he

¹⁰¹ I owe the terms *Motivation-first* and *Rationality-first* to Kieran Setiya.

¹⁰² As I said before, what exactly this "guise" is depends on the details of each theory of intentional action or practical rationality. Each such conception, I shall argue, will have to abandon the assumption of monolithicity to accommodate the possibility of primary motivational opposition.

¹⁰³ *Republic* 436b6-8.

goes on to argue that desire for drink cannot all be desire for *good* drink; some has to be desire for drink *as such*. According to the principle of opposites, one and the same subject cannot do or suffer opposites, in the same respect, towards the same thing and at the same time. *Therefore* the movements to and away from the drink must originate in different parts of the soul. What exactly the premises of the argument are and how they should be interpreted has been a matter of great controversy. What a great number of interpreters seem to agree on is that this type of argument has more defects than merits.¹⁰⁴ The fiercest criticism against the Platonic argument is that the principle of opposites “could easily disrupt the parts which it creates”¹⁰⁵ by generating parts every time there is conflict. For instance, every time two appetites – e.g. being hungry and thirsty - came into conflict they would, on this objection, generate parts in the soul. On one interpretation, we should take the Platonic text to imply that conflict generates parts of the soul only if it constitutes conflict between a disposition arising from *appetite* and a contrary disposition arising from *reason*; where appetite and reason are conceived of as distinct independently of conflict. Otherwise, all conflict will always be re-describable as conflict between distinct appetites, or distinct manifestations of reason. As Michael Woods observes, the problem is that “the bare fact of conflict is not enough to exclude a Humean analysis of the example [of the man who is at once pulled towards this drink and away from it]; *and if appeal is made to the fact that the impulses have different origins, the argument from the occurrence of conflict drops out as superfluous.*”¹⁰⁶ [my emphasis]

¹⁰⁴ For scholarly criticisms of the argument see Crombie 1962; Annas, 1981; Cross and Woosley, 1964; Penner, 1971; Cornford, 1912. For attempts to re-assess the argument from conflict see Lesses 1987; Cooper, 1984; Price 1995; Lorenz 2006; Moline, 1978; etc.

¹⁰⁵ Crombie, 1962, p. 355. Annas also puts forward this objection in Annas 1981, p. 137-8.

¹⁰⁶ Woods, 1987, p. 39. For similar criticism, see also Cross and Woosley 1964, p. 116; Crombie, op. cit., p. 356; Irwin 1977, p. 217; etc.

One plausible solution to this interpretative problem is to make a distinction along the lines of Bernard Williams' distinction between contingent and non-contingent conflicts.¹⁰⁷ On the one hand, we have contingent conflict: conflict between desires that arise from a contingent matter of fact, such that it is impossible that both desires should be satisfied, even though we can conceive of cases in which they could.¹⁰⁸ On the other hand, there are cases of conflict in which we cannot conceive of any change in the circumstances that would enable the contrary motivations to be jointly satisfied. These would be the non-contingent conflicts. As Williams himself puts it, could we figure out what would have to be different for it to be possible that an Australian "torn between spending Christmas in Christmassy surroundings in Austria, and spending it back home in the familiar Christmas heat of his birth-place" could satisfy both of his desires?¹⁰⁹ On this interpretative solution, if we could make some such distinction we might be able to claim that *only* non-contingent conflict between desires generates parts of the soul. But this would not solve the problem of the plausible generation of infinite parts. The reason is that it takes for granted what we need to argue for: that some conflicts are not dependent on contingent facts in the world, but on the (divided) nature of our soul. This conflict cannot be imagined away if we imagine a slight alteration in facts in the world. What we need to do is give an argument from non-contingent conflict to parts of the soul. This is what is lacking, and this is what I hope to do in this chapter.

As I will show in the rest of this chapter, promoting a certain distinction between types of motivational conflict does reveal that not all action motivation can be determined by a single

¹⁰⁷ Woods hints at this solution in Woods, 1987, but quickly dismisses it without appreciating its merits. For the elaboration of the distinction see Williams, 1965.

¹⁰⁸ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 104.

¹⁰⁹ Williams, *ibid.*, p. 104-5.

commensurable source of practical standards. All we have to do is give the proper analysis of two components of the Platonic principle of opposites. The first concerns the meaning of the “in the same respect” [κατά ταυτόν] part of the principle, and the second has to do with what the “one and the same object” [πρός ταυτόν] could be, in the case of action motivation.¹¹⁰ In this chapter I will argue that the distinction between derivative and primary motivational conflict helps us appreciate how *a certain kind of* conflict generates parts of the soul, if the following two conditions hold: (1) if “one and the same object” is taken to be an intentional action with the Thompsonian elementary structure presented in the previous chapter, and (2) if “in the same respect” is understood as the *specific guise* or the *specific character* of this elementary structure. The distinction between primary and derivative conflict allows us to show that one and the same agent cannot be motivated in opposed ways towards one and the same means-end synthesis at the same time, provided the guise of this synthesis is determined by a commensurable normative source; or in more Platonic terms, if the action is taken to originate in a single part of the soul.¹¹¹

As Woods, along with a great number of commentators, emphasizes, the *bare* fact of conflict is not sufficient to exclude a Humean analysis of conflict. These commentators often neglect to note that conflict should be understood in such a way as to exclude not only Humean, but also Rationalist alternatives. Otherwise, the argument from conflict cannot yield parts of the soul. In this chapter I will argue that a proper understanding of practical conflict is sufficient to

¹¹⁰ Remember the principle is that one and the same subject cannot do or suffer opposites, in the same respect, towards the same thing and at the same time.

¹¹¹ My interpretation of the Platonic argument moves in the general direction of the interpretation of Woods (Woods, 1987) and Price (Price, 1995) against the interpretation of Bobonich (Bobonich, 2002). It assumes that “one and the same subject” refers to the agent and not the parts of the soul and that the parts of the soul are specified in the “in the same regard” component of the principle of opposites. So, on my reading, the principle of opposites translates in the following way for the case of action motivation: one and the same agent cannot be moved in contrary ways towards one and the same action, with the same part of his soul (i.e. under the same guise of intentional action), at the same time.

exclude both the Humean and the Rationalist monolithic accounts. If this is so, then Plato's argument cannot have been as bad as interpreters have supposed. What was wrong all along was their shared assumption concerning the elementary structure of intentional action and hence action motivation.

2.1.3 *The Intuitiveness of the Distinction between Primary and Derivative Motivational*

Conflict

I said above that derivative motivational conflict is conflict between two motivations with regard to two different actions which happen to be jointly unrealizable. In such cases conflict is *derived* from the existence of the two initial motivations, together with facts about the promotion of at least one of these motivations. The formal definition of this kind of conflict is the following:

Derivative motivational conflict: being motivated to do-A-to-do-B and to not-do-A-to-do-B, at the same time, where the latter motivation derives from the motivation to do-C-to-do-D and the fact that one or both of its components (means or end descriptions) are jointly unrealizable with one or both of the components of the motivation to do-A-to-do-B.

The second kind of conflict, which I shall be calling *primary motivational conflict*, is conflict between a motivation towards and a motivation away from one and the same action; where *neither* motivation is derived in the above manner from a distinct motivation towards a different action together with facts about how it can be promoted. Again, more formally:

Primary motivational conflict: being motivated to do-A-to-do-B and to not-do-A-to-do-B, at the same time, where the latter motivation is *not* derived from the motivation to do-C-to-do-D and the fact that one or all of its components (means or end descriptions) are jointly unrealizable with one or all of the components of the motivation to do-A-to-do-B. (Where what one is motivated against when being motivated to not do-A-to-do-B is the whole of doing-A-to-do-B, and not A, B, or both.)

But why should we accept that there is any important distinction in the vicinity? Why should we not simply assume that all conflict is derivative? Is there any pre-theoretic purchase to this distinction? To see that there is, think of the following. Say that on a given occasion I both want to *buy a beer to have fun* and want to *buy a book to have fun* but there is only enough money for one purchase. In this case we can say that no matter what I wanted to buy the beer and the book for, if I both wanted to buy the beer (to do x) and wanted to buy the book (to do y), I would be in conflict, for the corresponding motivations would not be jointly realizable. In other words, if we re-described the relevant motivations as the motivation to *buy the beer to x* and the motivation to not *buy the beer to y*, this material would be enough to generate conflict. The reason is that in this case conflict would essentially concern the first component, or action description of the instrumental structure and not the connection between the components. Is it possible for conflict to irreducibly concern something other than merely one or both of its components as such?

To deny the possibility that conflict between two motivations may concern more than merely one or both of its components is to deny the *intuitive* possibility of a reflexive type of conflict. In this case of conflict what one is motivated against when one is motivated against doing-A-to-do-B is the very connection between doing A and doing B.¹¹² Imagine I'm bored at a bar wanting both to get another beer in order to have fun, and to not get another beer to have fun. If we take this to be a case of derivative motivational conflict in my sense, we would have to say that the latter motivation is derived from a further motivation together with facts about the impossibility of one or both of their components. So we can imagine the following cases of

¹¹² This is not to say that all primary motivational conflict is a matter of this very reflexive type of conflict, but only that to admit the possibility of this reflexive type of conflict we have to admit the possibility of non-derivative motivational conflict.

derivative conflict: I may be both motivated to get another beer in order to have fun and be motivated to get another beer *to treat a friend*, when I only have enough money for one purchase. Or I may be both motivated to get another beer in order to have fun and to be motivated *to go to another bar* to have fun, or I may be both motivated to get another drink to have fun and motivated to start reading my stupid book to see what will happen next, when I can't do both. To say that these cases exhaust the possibilities for conflict is to exclude cases of reflexive conflict, in which what I'm conflicted about is the very connection between the means and end descriptions of a certain means-end synthesis. If I am both motivated to get another beer to have fun and to not get another beer to have fun in the manner of this reflexive type of conflict, the conflict does not concern the "getting another beer" or the "having fun" action-descriptions, or both. The conflict concerns the *specific* character of the connection between getting another beer and having fun. In being motivated against getting another beer to have fun I may not be motivated against getting another beer; and I may not be motivated against having fun as such either. I may instead be motivated against thinking of getting beer together with having fun, because I puritanically think that one should not be drinking alcohol to have fun. Or, more typically, I may be motivated against thinking of getting another beer together with having fun, because I prudently think that if getting beer will give me a hangover then it will not be fun.¹¹³

As I will argue in the final chapter of this dissertation, what I'm in two minds about when I'm both motivated to get another beer to have fun and motivated to not get another beer to have

¹¹³ Of course, this type of conflict need not take the specific reflexive form. It may take a less reflexive form, as for instance some of the cases in which I'm both motivated to get another beer to have fun, and I am motivated to go to bed early to get a good night's sleep, and *in* the latter motivation I'm prudently thinking that getting another beer will not be fun.

fun in the manner of primary conflict is this: whether getting another beer to have fun is *indeed* called for in the circumstances or not; i.e. whether it is *indeed* enjoyable or not. What I'm interested in for now is that to assume that it is not possible to be in primary motivational conflict towards one and the same action of the form "doing A to do B" is to assume that one cannot be in two minds about whether a *specific* instrumental connection is appropriate or not in the circumstances. In other words, it is to assume that one cannot be in doubt about whether a specific means-end connection is well thought of or not. But to assume this would be to deny the appearances, for it would exclude the possibility of the clearly reflexive types of conflict.

In the rest of this chapter, I will assume then that the distinction between primary and derivative motivational conflict is an irreducible, sound distinction we readily make in our daily lives.

2.2 THE CONNECTION BETWEEN ACTION MOTIVATION AND PRACTICAL RATIONALITY

In what follows I will explore the suggestion that to explain action motivation as such is to show that the intentional action one is motivated towards is subject to a single, commensurable requirement of practical rationality. This may be so in two cases: (a) if what it is to be practically rational is defined in terms of independent facts about the perfect instance of acting intentionally, and (b) if what it is to act intentionally is defined in terms of independent facts about what it is to be practically rational. In the first case, to explain acting intentionally would be to show how if it were a perfect instance of its kind, it would be practically rational, and in

this sense it would be to reveal it to be subject to norms of practical rationality. In the second case to explain acting intentionally would be to show it to be to some extent at least practically rational, and in this sense it would be to reveal it to be subject to the norms of practical rationality.

Thus, theories which attempt to explain the connection between action motivation and practical rationality usually take one of two general forms. They may either suppose that we have access to independent facts about intentional action, and hence action motivation, in terms of which we can then explain facts about practical rationality; or they may suppose that we have independent access to facts about practical rationality in terms of which we can then explain intentional action and hence action motivation. I will call theories of the first form Motivation-first because they take motivation to be prior to practical rationality in the order of explanation. I will call theories of the second form Rationality-first because they take rationality to be prior to motivation in the order of explanation.

The distinction between Motivation-first and Rationality-first theories maps *in part*¹¹⁴ onto a particular interpretation of the popular, although much debated, distinction between internalism and externalism about practical reasons.¹¹⁵ On a standard interpretation of the internalism/externalism debate suggested for instance by Parfit, “Internalists derive conclusions about reasons from psychological claims about the motivation that, under certain conditions, we would in fact have. Externalists derive, from normative claims about what is worth achieving,

¹¹⁴ I will explain this qualification in what follows.

¹¹⁵ See for instance Brady, 2000; Cohon, 1993; Gert, 2001; Johnson, 1999; Lillehammer, 2000; Parfit, 1997; Setiya, 2004.

conclusions about reasons, and about the motivation that we ought to have.”¹¹⁶ But, as a number of philosophers have suggested, this definition is not helpful because both Kantians, like Christine Korsgaard, and non-Humeans about rationality, like David Smith, may count as internalist by these lights.¹¹⁷ As far as my purposes here are concerned, this distinction does not map on to my distinction between Motivation-first and Rationality-first theories. This is because, as Korsgaard herself argues, we do not need to claim that we have access to facts about the constitution of action motivation independently of facts about practical rationality, in order to derive conclusions about reasons from facts about how we would be motivated under certain conditions.¹¹⁸ We can for instance suggest that one has a reason to ϕ in case one would be motivated to ϕ *if one were fully rational*.

The interpretation of the distinction that *in part* maps on to my distinction between Motivation-first and Rationality-first theories is based on Setiya’s interpretation of Williams’ internalism.¹¹⁹ Reformulating Setiya’s¹²⁰ formulation of Williams’ view, I can say that according to internalism about reasons the fact that p is a (practical) reason for A to ϕ only if there is a *sound*¹²¹ deliberative route from A ’s relevant beliefs taken together with his subjective

¹¹⁶ Parfit, 1997, p. 102.

¹¹⁷ See Setiya *forthcoming*, Korsgaard, 1986; Smith, 1995; etc.

¹¹⁸ See Korsgaard, 1986.

¹¹⁹ See Setiya *forthcoming*, and Williams, 1971.

¹²⁰ See Setiya, *forthcoming*.

¹²¹ I have replaced “broadly instrumental route” with “sound deliberative route” in Setiya’s formulation, to lay emphasis on the fact that for Williams’ Internalism the route through which one comes to the desire to p is a route which is subject to *certain* standards of correctness. McDowell (McDowell, 1995) objects, I think, to Williams’ Internalism on exactly this score. He insists that the externalist need not suppose that the agent needs to come to be motivated by an external reason through a sound deliberative route. Williams responds to McDowell’s objection that the fact that there are some constraints on what counts as a sound deliberative route (constraints on what would count as deliberatively arriving from one’s existing S at the project of ϕ -ing (See Williams, 1995a p. 188)) does not mean that the agent for whom this route is available should in fact be able to deliberate in this way. (Williams, 1995a) But I believe that McDowell means to doubt that the externalist should have to specify general criteria of what counts as soundly deliberating from an existing motivation to ϕ -ing for every normative reason to ϕ . What she should perhaps specify is specific criteria of what counts as deliberating correctly in order to claim

motivational set, and the belief that p , to the desire to ϕ . As Setiya nicely shows this view is committed to two substantial claims: (1) for a fact to be a practical reason for an agent, the agent must be capable of being motivated by that fact, and (2) an agent is capable of being motivated to act by some fact only if *there is* a sound deliberative route from his belief concerning that fact together with (some elements in) his (actual) motivational set to the desire to so act.

On this interpretation of reasons internalism, a fact is a reason for an agent to perform an action just in case the agent can be motivated to perform the action in question. And to be motivated to act should be understood as *independent* of facts about rationality. Motivation is construed out of the following material: an independently determined set of dispositional states and a way of reaching new motivational states which is both deliberative (answers the first person question about what is to be done) and constrained by standards of correctness. In other words, to be motivated to ϕ is conceived of as reaching the desire to ϕ from an existing set of motivational states as a result of sound deliberation, broadly conceived.¹²² On the corresponding conception of externalism, a fact is a reason for an agent to perform an action, independently of whether the agent can be motivated to perform the action in question, on a non-*rational*ly constrained conception of motivation.

With this distinction in hand, we can now see that the Motivation-first theories are internalist theories of reasons. This is because on the Williams variety of internalism about reasons, we need to have an independent grasp of what counts as motivation in order to determine what counts as a practical reason for an agent. But this just is the Motivation-first view. I said above

that one has an external reason to ϕ . Otherwise McDowell is ready to admit, the charge of irrationality is indeed a bluff.

¹²² As Williams himself notes, these constraints are not to be conceived of narrowly on the instrumentalist conception of deliberation; i.e. figuring out the means to one's ends. (See Williams, 1995a)

that my distinction maps onto this interpretation of the Internalism/Externalism distinction only *in part*. This is because the externalist view does not need to be committed to a Rationality-first theory. The reason is that an externalist by the lights of the above distinction may determine what it is for a fact or consideration to be a practical reason for someone independently of prior facts about motivation, without having to explain motivation in terms of practical reasons. The externalist in question may for instance be an instrumentalist about motivation, or she may simply develop a non-explanatory version of the connection between rationality and motivation.¹²³ But on my distinction, Rationality-first views are the theories on which motivation is explained as such in terms of (independently) available facts about practical rationality. The most that we can say then about the connection between Reasons-first and Externalist views is that Reasons-first theories are *compatible* with externalism about reasons.

In what follows I shall take up the Motivation-first and Rationality-first theories in turn and argue that the monolithic versions of these theories cannot allow for the possibility of primary motivational conflict.

2.2.1 *Motivation-first Monolithic Theories*

In the first chapter I argued that the view that the norms to which action motivation is subject are the norms of propositional attitudes towards the ends of the relevant actions is a non-starter. Someone like Williams may argue that in doing so I focused on a very narrow version of the Humean picture and not against what *he* would call *internalism about reasons*. I focused, that is,

¹²³ She may simply not think much of the problems that usually force a non-Humean to give an explanatory story. (Here, I have in mind problems such as weakness of will and apathy. The former seems to show that sometimes we are motivated to act against the weight of our own practical reasons, non-Humeanly conceived, and the latter seem to show that we are often not motivated by the weight of our practical reasons, non-Humeanly conceived.) She may think that it is just a brute fact about practical rationality or about the human condition that some practical reasons motivate and some don't.

on instrumentalism: the view that one is rationally required to take the means to the ends one intends or desires. In doing so, Williams may argue, I ignored “much wider possibilities for Humean deliberation, such as: thinking how the satisfaction of elements in S can be combined, e.g. by time-ordering; where there is some irresolvable conflict among the elements of S, considering which one attaches most weight to... or again, finding constitutive solutions, such as deciding what would make for an entertaining evening, granted that one wants entertainment.”¹²⁴

As I showed in the first chapter, instrumentalism does not fail because of the narrow scope interpretation commonly attached to it (on which the only possibility for deliberation ultimately consists in the thought of what action is the means to the satisfaction of an element in S). Instrumentalism fails because of its assumption about the elementary structure of intentional action. The assumption is that the source of the “instrumental” requirement (whether it is the requirement to do or intend what serves the end on a narrow conception, or what constitutes the end, what better harmonizes the end with other ends, etc. on a broader such conception) is a propositional attitude towards the end description of what in reality is the means-end structure of a type of event. To show this, I first argued that the narrow scope reading of the instrumental requirement (however broadly conceived) yields counter-intuitive results. Of course Williams claims that “The deliberative process can also subtract elements from S.”¹²⁵ And then he adds that it can subtract both beliefs and desires. But as I also argued in the first chapter, the wide scope reading of instrumental rationality is as inadequate as the narrow scope interpretation. The problem with any instrumentalist picture which makes the above assumption concerning the structure of intention, and thus the problem with the broadly instrumentalist picture that Williams

¹²⁴ Williams, 1979, p. 104.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 104.

advocates, is that it cannot explain the following: why in deliberating about whether to subtract a desire from S the agent *ought* to take into consideration what *she knows* would be involved in satisfying a desire. In other words the instrumentalist view cannot explain why the agent ought to think of an action in a means-end connection. At most, it explains that sometimes a fuller appreciation of what's involved in satisfying a desire may *indeed* lead to the subtraction of the desire from S.¹²⁶

But as I myself noted at the end of the previous chapter and at the beginning of this one, refuting instrumentalism, even of the broader Williams variety, does not prove that desire may not constitute the normative ground of action motivation. Desire may constitute this normative ground qua disposition towards individual means-end syntheses. Suppose then we accept that an intentional action is an etiological, means-end synthesis expressible in naïve rationalizations of the form “I’m doing A because I’m doing B.” We can still claim that the particular disposition to *do A in order to do B* (where doing A to do B is an individual synthesis) can only count as an instance of action motivation to the extent that it realizes a general disposition towards *specific* means-end syntheses; for instance means-end syntheses which bring about pleasure, or manifest self-control, self-consciousness, etc.¹²⁷ This is the distinguishing claim of what I shall be calling from now on the monolithic Motivation-first theories. Let me explain the sense in which these theories count as both monolithic and Motivation-first.

These Humean accounts develop mainly as a response to the problem of objectivity that Internalist theories of the Williams variety are commonly taken to face. On this objection, the main fault of the internalist theories of reasons, even the supposedly non-myopic non-

¹²⁶ See Williams, 1979, p. 104-5.

¹²⁷ I will explain in what sense exactly these syntheses are specific later on in the chapter.

instrumentalist theories, is that they relativize practical reasons to an agent's *contingent* motivational set. Rendering practical reasons relative to particular agents' actual motivational sets threatens the objectivity of reasons claims on the one hand, and the possibility of rational criticism of people's behavior, on the other. Williams himself, in responding to this last charge, retorts that there is a whole battery of concepts we use to criticize people's behavior like "This was a cruel thing to do." We should have no use for a concept of practical rationality for the specific purpose of passing judgment on people's behavior anyway, he insists.¹²⁸ But even if we grant Williams' response to the charge of losing our grip on the possibility of rational criticism of people's behavior,¹²⁹ what is more troubling is the risk of losing our grip on the sense in which practical reasons are objective.¹³⁰ The externalist can determine this sense negatively by claiming that a practical reason is objective only if it does *not* depend on (elements of) the agent's *contingent* motivational set. The internalist does not have recourse to this negative definition.

Instead, the internalist needs to have recourse to a positive definition of objectivity. This motivation leads to a monolithic version of the Motivation-first theories. On this monolithic

¹²⁸ See Williams, 1979, p. 110.

¹²⁹ As an aside, I should mention here that I think that Williams' response is weak. The possibility of rational criticism of other people's behavior is not just a heuristic tool for strengthening the effect of our judgment on them, but an integral part of what it means to participate in a community. It enables people to conceive of themselves as capable of subjecting even the *communal* standards themselves to criticism and re-evaluation. The fact that we find ourselves at all times on Neurath's ship, fixing now this part and then that part of our conceptual scheme, but never the whole ship at the same time, does not mean that there are parts of it that cannot be fixed at all. To say that a particular behavior is not rational may for instance be to say that its cruelty, previously established by the community, has been checked and has not been found wanting as a reason against it. To say then that the extra characterization of the cruel action as irrational is idle may be to suppose that we cannot submit the communal standards of what counts as cruelty to the test. But why should we suppose this?

¹³⁰ Here's what Williams himself says "The truth of the sentence [A has a reason to ϕ] implies very roughly that A has some motive which will be served or furthered by his ϕ -ing, and if this turns out not to be so the sentence is false: there is a condition relating to the agent's aims, and if this is not satisfied it is not true to say...that he has a reason to ϕ ." (Williams, 1971, p.101) But if there is a condition relating to the agent's aims, then, unless we postulate that all agents have more or less the same aims, then we seem to lose our grip on the sense in which a practical reason is a reason for *anyone* in the circumstances.

version the guise of the means-end synthesis one is motivated towards is determined by a single commensurable requirement of practical rationality: in this case, the requirement to realize to some extent a *specific* disposition which is what makes one an agent. On a positive definition of objectivity, practical reasons are objective in the sense that they depend on an element in the agent's existing motivational set that is necessarily present in *all* beings of some relevant set. Depending on the details of each view this set could be the set of all beings with desires, all agents, all rational agents, etc.¹³¹ The Motivation-first theorist does not relativize normative reasons to those elements in the agent's existing motivational set that are necessarily present in all *rational* agents. The reason is that by definition on the Motivation-first theory, facts about practical rationality are explained in terms of motivation and not the other way around. What the Motivation-first theorist relativizes the agent's practical reasons to is an element which is necessarily present in the motivational sets of all *agents* as such. This relativization is what makes the Humean accounts both Motivation-first and monolithic.

This strategy of relativizing the agent's normative reasons to an element necessarily present in the motivational sets of all agents takes the form of a function argument. On this strategy, one starts from independent facts about the function of agency and proceeds to show that a state of practical rationality is a state in which this function is performed *excellently* or *fully*. In particular, the Motivation-first theorist starts from a conception of the function of agency which

¹³¹ For a version of the objectivist internalist theories on which practical reason depends on an element that is necessarily present in the motivational sets of all beings with desires (i.e. *any* desire) see Schroeder's peculiar version of instrumentalism (Schroeder, 2007). For versions on which practical reason depends on an element that is necessarily present in the motivational sets of all agents as such see Velleman, 1989, 1996, 2000. And for a version on which practical reason depends on an element that is necessarily present in the motivational sets of all (ideally) rational agents see Korsgaard, 1986 and Smith, 1995.

presupposes the engagement with a *specific* agent-general disposition,¹³² and proceeds to show that practical rationality is the state at which this specific disposition is *maximally* realized. This account of practical rationality is a maximizing account; one on which the agent is *rationally* required to pursue the greatest realization of the agent-general disposition.

As Velleman puts it, “...reasons for acting apply to someone only because he has an inclination that lends them an influence, *but the requisite inclination is the one that makes him an agent*, not one that determines his individual course of action”¹³³[my emphasis]. So, following a Motivation-first theorist like Velleman, we can take action to have a constitutive aim or function. On Velleman’s view, we can take intentional action to be constituted as such out of *mere* behavior by the specific aim that a higher order activity controlling this behavior exhibits.¹³⁴ We may, for instance, assume that this action constitutive aim is to be in conscious control of one’s behavior or have a guiding awareness of what one is doing,¹³⁵ or to do what makes sense,¹³⁶ or to act in accordance with reasons,¹³⁷ etc. We may, in general, take it that unintentional behavior on this strategy is constituted as intentional action if it is prompted by the constitutive aim to achieve x. On this picture, for a piece of behavior to be prompted by one’s

¹³² When I say here that the agent-general disposition is specific I mean to point out the fact that this disposition belongs to wider genus of dispositions for movement. On this interpretation of the function argument, out of all dispositions to be moved to “do” things, we can identify one, which is the agent-general disposition: the disposition to be moved to act intentionally. I’ll have more to say about this later on.

¹³³ Velleman, 1996, p. 714.

¹³⁴ On this conception action is constituted by a basic activity and a higher order activity which, as a result of its distinctive aim, turns the merely reflexive activity into full-blooded intentional action. In Velleman’s words, intentional action is like a capitalist enterprise; like “the corporate enterprise of work performed under management”. (Velleman, 1996, p. 718) But what Velleman overlooks is that the capitalist enterprise just is a distinctive sort of action, and so the analogy fails.

¹³⁵ As in Velleman, 1996.

¹³⁶ As in Velleman, 1989.

¹³⁷ As in Velleman, 2000.

aim to x, one must have a specific inclination or disposition towards x. On Velleman's autonomist view, this inclination would for instance be "an inclination towards autonomy."¹³⁸

In principle, there is no constraint on what this general inclination could be. It could turn out that the inclination which makes us agents is the inclination towards pleasure, or the inclination towards inner harmony and balance, the inclination towards the satisfaction of one's desires, etc.. The details of the different versions of the Motivation-first theories do not matter here. What matters is that for a piece of behavior to qualify as intentional action, this behavior needs to engage with, i.e. realize to some extent, an agent-general inclination. On this most general characterization of a Motivation-first theory, one counts as having a practical reason to ϕ to the extent that one achieves the constitutive aim to x, and so to the extent that one realizes the specific agent-general disposition to x. *On this conception*, to reveal action motivation to be subject to practical norms is to show it to be subject to the standards of what counts as having a practical reason for what one does. In other words, it is to reveal it to approximate the maximal realization of the specific agent-general disposition to x.

Philip Clark objects to Velleman's view, and, I take it, to all constitutivist views of the Motivation-first variety, claiming that if no fully intentional action can fail to achieve the constitutive aim of action, then no fully intentional action will be rationally criticizable as being performed against the weight of practical reasons.¹³⁹ In Clark's words, on Velleman's account of the constitutive goal of intentional action "...any fully intentional action reaches that goal. Any

¹³⁸ Velleman, 1996, p. 723.

¹³⁹ See Clark, 2001.

fully intentional action is, literally, perfectly well suited to the goal. Consequently, Velleman must deny that any fully intentional action is contrary to the weight of reasons.”¹⁴⁰

But this line of criticism makes the unwarranted assumption that the constitutive aim of action is an aim that *cannot* be realized to varying degrees. If we take action’s constitutive aim to be the exercise of a particular capacity (or the activation of a certain disposition), and we take this capacity to be realizable with varying degrees of success, we can claim that it is a *minimal* exercise of this capacity that suffices to turn mere behavior into an intentional action. That only a minimal exercise of this capacity is sufficient to turn behavior into action does not mean that *only* this minimal exercise is involved in all actions. Michael Smith points this out, when discussing Donald Davidson’s similar criticism that views which postulate the realization of the disposition to *x*¹⁴¹ as *constitutive* of intentional action leave no explanatory role for the claim that an agent ϕ s because she has the disposition to *x*.¹⁴² As Smith notes, it may be true that the minimum requirement for the constitution of action is that the agent possesses and exercises the very local capacity or the disposition to *x*. It would be a fallacy to conclude from this that it is only an agent’s possession and exercise of this minimal local capacity or disposition that figures in the explanation of her actions. Similarly, it would be a fallacy to suppose that just because a minimal exercise of the capacity or the disposition to *x* is what an agent needs to engage with in order to act intentionally, only this minimal capacity should figure in the explication of the practical reasons for what the agent did. In fact, on a Motivation-first theory, an agent counts as

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 583.

¹⁴¹ In Smith’s case this disposition is the disposition to be (instrumentally) rational, which is fully realized when one is ideally rational, independently conceived. So Smith’s version of internalism is not a Motivation-first version. If anything it is rather a Reasons-first view. But his version of internalism employs the strategy of the function argument, and in this regard his response to Davidson’s criticism is useful for my purposes here. See Smith, 2009.

¹⁴² Of course Smith may be wrong to use this argument against Davidson’s claim, but this is not my concern here.

being more or less practically rational in performing an action, to the extent that she approximates the *maximal* realization of the agent-general disposition. The fact that the agent needs to realize this disposition to some minimal degree to count as acting intentionally does not mean that she cannot realize this disposition to a fuller degree. On this picture then, the agent ought to realize the specific agent-general disposition to a minimal degree for her behavior to qualify as acting intentionally, and she ought to realize it to a fuller degree for her intentional action to qualify as more rational; the same way a piece of metal must supposedly to some extent cut to count as a *knife*, and it must to some extent cut well to count as a *good knife*.¹⁴³ Thus one and the same criterion can count as both *the all or nothing* principle of what counts as an intentional action and the *maximization* principle of what counts as a rational intentional action.

The problem with the monolithic Motivation-first views is not that the realization of the agent-general disposition to x cannot admit of degrees; i.e. that a function argument which starts from the constitutive aim of action cannot render an account of rationality on this score. In fact, the possibility of realizing the agent-general disposition to degrees is what explains how an agent may be in derivative motivational conflict, even though there is only *one* disposition that must each time be realized for the agent to count as being motivated to act. One may for instance both be motivated to bake a cake to eat something sweet and motivated to not bake the cake to avoid the calories, because the two motivations both constitute realizations of the agential disposition

¹⁴³ The general motivation for using the function argument in this context is the controversial assumption that the function of an object is what constitutes it in the sense that this object can be determined as the composite of another object that bears the function and the effect of the exercise of the function on the object. I believe that this assumption is a distortion of the function argument as it was for instance laid out in the 1st book of the *Nicomachean Ethics*. On a more Aristotelian conception, that an object has a function means that an object can be recognizable as (potentially) such if it is deprived of the *exercise* of its function but it cannot be recognizable as (potentially) such if it is deprived of the *potential* for this exercise. Thus we cannot say that the function of cutting turns a piece of metal into a knife, for a piece of metal cannot be recognized as potentially cutting if it is deprived of the potential for being a knife.

to x (to be in control of what one does, for instance), only to varying degrees. For instance, on given occasions, the motivation to not bake the cake to avoid the calories may realize the agential disposition to be in control of what one does to a fuller degree than the motivation to bake the cake to eat something sweet, and *vice versa*.

The question that I want to raise in what follows is this: how is it possible for two contrary dispositions towards one and the same action to realize one and the same agent-general disposition at the same time? In other words, how is primary motivational conflict possible on this picture? In what follows I will argue that it is not. Let me take things slowly. On all monolithic Motivation-first accounts, a particular disposition towards ϕ counts as the action motivation to ϕ , to the extent that it approximates the agent-general disposition to x . Of course on these theories, the disposition in question has an extremely *wide* scope. On one of Velleman's views, it is the *agent-general* disposition to be-in-conscious-control-of-one's-behavior, on another it is to do-what-makes-sense, etc.. The point of assuming the extremely *wide* scope of the dispositions in question is to allow an agent's peculiar practical conditions to *further* specify exactly which particular action motivations will realize the agent-general disposition. If Velleman is right, the fact that our particular dispositions ought to realize the agent-general disposition to be in conscious control of what one does leaves it open whether on a particular occasion one's disposition to go to the moon to take some air, travel in time to prevent an accident, or just bake a cake to perfect one's baking skills might count as action motivations in this sense.

But one could claim that however *wide* the scope of the agent-general disposition may be, it is nevertheless specific. As I pointed out above, the agent-general disposition is picked out as

such from an even more general set of dispositions; the dispositions to be moved to do both intentional and non-intentional things. In other words they belong as species to a genus of dispositions for movement. They are determined as such prior to facts about practical rationality. If the agent-general disposition is specified prior to facts about practical rationality, if it is recognized as belonging to the genus of mere dispositions to move, then the criteria of its identification as agent-general will have to make no reference to facts about practical rationality. A good first candidate for such a criterion is the principle of non-contradiction, on which if the disposition to do-A-to-do-B realizes the agent-general disposition to x to a certain extent, then to this extent the disposition to not do-A-to-do-B will not count as realizing this disposition. Assume we take this agent-general disposition to be the disposition to be in control of what one does, and this disposition is identifiable as such prior to facts about practical rationality. In this case, it must be clear in advance whether going-to-the-moon-to-get-some-air in particular circumstances realizes the agent-general disposition to be-in-conscious-control-of-what-one-does or not. If we assume it does, it must be clear in advance that there is a fact of the matter about whether it will realize the agent-general disposition to *a certain degree or not*. In other words, however wide the scope of the agent-general disposition may be, it must be specified in some way. If it is specified independently of facts about practical rationality, since the order of explanation is supposed to move from facts about motivation to practical rationality, we need a criterion of specification. For how else would we be able to individuate this specific disposition against the background of all dispositions to be moved to do things, if not by specifying what things falls under the scope of its object? To do this we would need a *criterion* of specification. The most obvious candidate for such a criterion is the principle of non-contradiction, on which it must be clear in advance whether e.g. going-to-the-park-to-get-some-air in particular

circumstances realizes the agent-general disposition to be-in-conscious-control-of-what-one-does or not. If this is so, it will have to be the case that either the disposition *to do A to do B* or the disposition *to not do A to do B*, but not both, will count as the motivation to ϕ (where ϕ stands for a specific means-end synthesis). And primary motivational opposition will be impossible.

But Velleman may still insist that it may be the case that both the disposition to go the park to get some air and the disposition to not go to the park to get some air may to varying or even to the same imperfect degree realize the agent-general disposition to be in conscious control of what one does. It may turn out for instance that *going-to-the-park-to-get-some-air* realizes the disposition to be in conscious control of what one does, because it is an instance of caring for one's own well-being, and doing something for one's own well-being is a way of being in conscious control of what one does. And it may also be the case that *not going-to-the-park-to-get-some-air* realizes the agent-general disposition because it is an instance of acting against one's dispositions, and acting against one's own dispositions is a way of being in conscious control of what one does, however adolescent the mood of such a disposition.

To see how the argument would work, grant that what I proposed in the first chapter about the elementary structure of intentional action is right. Grant, that is, that the means-end synthesis is not a mere complex of a means and an end description as Korsgaard seems to assume. Grant that it is a series of means-end thoughts of the form "I'm doing A because I'm doing B, and I'm doing B because I'm doing C, etc.," where this series cannot include a description of a doing which was not performed by doing something else as means. If we also grant now, together with Velleman, that each of these descriptions ultimately constitutes the realization of an agent-general disposition, then we have to also grant that each of these dispositions constitutes the

realization of a further disposition, which constitutes the realization of a further disposition, which ultimately constitutes the realization of the agent-general disposition. If this is so, we also have to grant that a particular disposition to do A-to-do-B and a disposition to not do-A-to-do-B may realize the disposition to do-B-to-do-C, and the disposition to do-B-to-do-D respectively, both of which realize in turn the agent-general disposition to x (where x is the agent-general desire posited by our preferred motivation-first theory). And, thus, Velleman might be able to claim that he can accommodate the possibility of primary motivational conflict.

The point is that it seems hard to understand why it is not possible for both doing-A-to-do-B and not doing-A-to-do-B to realize one and the same agent-general disposition at the same time, via the realization of different intervening dispositions which both happen to realize the agent-general disposition. The question I want to raise now is how these intervening dispositions might realize the agent-general disposition.

There are two options here. Either these intervening dispositions are commensurable or not.¹⁴⁴ Take David Wiggins' definition of incommensurability, "The set (A, B, C, D...) constitutes an incommensurable set of options if and only if it is *not* the case that there is one property ϕ and one measure M of ϕ -ness such that ϕ and M satisfy all the following conditions: a) It is determined by M which is the more ϕ member of any pair (X, Y) consisting of options drawn from the set (A, B, C, D...), b) comparisons in respect of ϕ -ness ground correct deliberative choice between the members of each and every pair drawn from the set (A, B, C, D...) and are antecedent in reason to choice between them. c) Comparisons in respect of ϕ -ness

¹⁴⁴ Notice that, as has been noted, values may be incommensurable in two senses: they may be either incommensurable strictly speaking or incomparable. Chang for instance notes we should "reserve the term "incommensurable" for items that cannot be precisely measured by some common scale of units and of value and the term "incomparable" for items that cannot be compared." (Chang, 1997, p. 5) I use the term incommensurable here in the more specific sense that Wiggins defines which comes close to Chang's first sense.

reflect a proper regard for every choice-relevant feature of any member of the set (A, B, C, D...)"¹⁴⁵

In our case here, if the intervening dispositions are commensurable, there is a measure M by which one can establish that each of these intervening dispositions is more or less ϕ (i.e. realizes the agent-general disposition to a greater or lesser degree than another disposition in the set of intervening dispositions). And one can ground correct deliberative decisions based on comparisons in respect of the maximal realization of the agent-general disposition which reflect all that is choice-worthy about the alternative intervening dispositions. Assume that there is such a measure M and property ϕ , that the intervening dispositions are thus commensurable, and that it is possible to be in primary motivational conflict with regard to them. Velleman must in this case look for a further criterion of the specification of the scope of the agent-general disposition, other than the principle of non-contradiction. For if it is possible to both have the intervening disposition to do-B-to-do-C and the intervening disposition to not do-B-to-do-C at the same time because each disposition realizes the agent-general disposition to x to the same degree, one would have to provide an alternative criterion for the specification of the scope of this agent-general disposition. I cannot argue here that it is not possible to provide any such criterion, but as far as I can tell, no promising criterion is in the offing.

But even if this quest for an alternative criterion is satisfiable, Velleman would still not be able to do full justice to the reality of motivational conflict. For even if we assume that the intervening dispositions can be contrary and still count as action motivations, because they realize the agent general disposition to varying, measurable degrees, it will be a wonder how

¹⁴⁵ See Wiggins, 1997.

anyone chooses to do what realizes the agent-general disposition to a lesser extent. So, motivational conflict would never actually translate to action, and would thus be rendered totally irrelevant for our deliberative situation in the world.

If on the other hand, there is no measure *M* against which to judge whether one of the intervening dispositions realizes the agent-general disposition to a greater or lesser extent, we are in danger of losing the explanatory and deliberative criterion for what counts as the *most* rational thing to do. For in this case to say that non intervening dispositions count as action motivations because they realize the agent general disposition *to the maximum* is to say one of the following things: either that the function argument of the Motivation-first views does not work because practical rationality cannot be defined as the maximization of any property, or that the intervening dispositions simply collectively constitute the set of agent-general dispositions. If an agent counts as acting for reasons to the extent that she realizes an agent specific disposition, and there is more than one such disposition, then to this extent the account of intentional action is not monolithic. This latter alternative solution turns the monolithic Motivation-first views into the material multi-dimensional views that I will examine in the final chapter.

The proponent of the Motivation-first view has two more avenues of escape: she may claim either that primary motivational conflict is in reality conflict between a disposition that counts as an action motivation and a disposition that does not, or that primary motivational conflict is always re-describable as derivative motivational conflict. Both avenues of escape lead to a dead-end. On the first response, I shouldn't have presupposed in the introduction to this chapter that the conflicting items in primary motivational conflict are both motivations. This response cannot be right. The reason this kind of conflict is conflict between motivations and not conflict

between a motivation and a mere disposition is that, in such cases, both dispositions could issue in action that would be recognizably intentional. This is manifest when we are dealing with cases of repeated conflict which may on certain occasions get resolved one way and on other occasions another way. Think, for instance, of us habitual smokers and our perennial question about whether to smoke just this one cigarette for fun or not. How could we assume in such cases *both* that the two possible outcomes may count as intentional actions *and* that the dispositions on each side remain pretty much unchanging, if the dispositions to ϕ couldn't both count as motivations?

Alternatively, one may suggest that what I call primary motivational conflict may be reduced to derivative motivational conflict, even if action is understood as having the elementary structure of a certain means-end synthesis. On this objection, it could be the case that when I'm motivated to both go to the moon to take some air and not go to the moon to take some air, what happens is that I may be motivated to go to the moon to take some air *to get some radically new air*, and I may be motivated to do to the moon to get some air *to get the air I usually get*. In this case I would have to count as being motivated to do A to do B and to not do A to do C, and so I would have to count as being derivatively conflicted.

The obvious response to this suggestion is that deliberations have to come to an end. In other words, that there is a description which is a final telic description of an action. We would only be able to re-describe every case of primary conflict as derivative if there was *always* a further action description which could be said to relate to the previous action-descriptions as an end. In this way we could always say that to be motivated to do A to do B and not do A to do B should be re-described as doing A to do B to do C and not doing A to do B to do Z. If there is

such a thing as the final term, y, in the series of means-end rationalizations inscribed in intentional action, then it will be possible to say of it that an agent is motivated to do something else, x, to do that thing, y, and that the agent is motivated to not do x to do y. In this case primary motivational opposition would be perfectly possible, only less frequent. To allow for this objection then we would have to allow for the possibility that reason-giving may go on *ad infinitum*.

Even if we grant the independent plausibility of assuming that reason giving could go on *ad infinitum*, what we cannot assume is that this plausibility really makes sense against the background of a Motivation-first view. If the rationalizing order inscribed in an intentional action is bound to go on forever, we will not be able to ascertain to what extent a given disposition to do A to do B will realize the agent-general disposition to do x. We will not be able to ascertain to what extent we are acting for reasons when are in fact doing something, and to what extent we have practical reasons to perform an action when we are thinking about whether to perform it. But what can the use of a concept of practical rationality be if it does not allow us to assess the relative rationality of actions, and to some extent at least guide our decisions and choices?

2.2.2 *Rationality-first Monolithic Theories*

2.2.2.1 *Reasons-first Monolithic Theories*. It may appear that the solution to this problem is to simply give up on the idea that one's motivation needs to realize a certain disposition, whose scope is specified independently of facts about practical rationality. One may suggest that monolithic Motivation-first views fail to allow for primary motivational conflict because they do not specify the scope of the necessary agent-general disposition in accordance with facts about

what one has practical reason to do. But, I will show now, this diagnosis is not promising. Even if the scope of the agent-general disposition is specified by reference to facts about practical rationality, it will not admit of contrary specifications either. Let me present one such view and explain why all similar views have to count as failing to allow for primary conflict.

On a popular view of practical rationality, “rationality involves systematic connections between a person’s judgments and his or her *subsequent* attitudes”¹⁴⁶[my emphasis]. On this picture, rationality is the state in which the agent’s judgments about what one has reason to do are followed by the appropriate attitudes: i.e. action motivation. These are judgments about what is good, valuable, worthwhile, etc. about the action that are all ultimately reduced to judgments about reasons. From now on, I will call the judgments that are taken by each theory to issue in intentional action “practical judgments.”¹⁴⁷ So, for instance, on Scanlon’s view, to merely believe that drinking beer is a way of having fun is not sufficient to motivate one to act to drink beer. For there are plenty of cases, we are told, in which one believes that doing A is (a way of) doing B, but one is left cold by the prospect of doing A to do B. To be motivated to act, one must *in addition* take the belief that drinking beer is a way of having fun *to be a (good) reason* for doing so. This last sort of attitude is for Scanlon the paradigmatic form of practical judgment. In Scanlon’s own words: “In order for a consideration to be an operative reason for me, I have to believe it. *In addition*, I have to take it to be a reason for the attitude in question. *These are separate attitudes*. I can believe something without taking it to be a reason for

¹⁴⁶ Scanlon, 1998, p. 33.

¹⁴⁷ The exact content and form of these judgments is of course different for different theories, even sharing the same basic assumptions. So for Scanlon for instance, practical judgments are the judgments that one has good reason to do something (see Scanlon, 1998); for Raz they are the judgments that doing something is good (see Raz, 1999a); for Nagel they are the judgments that one ought to do something (see Nagel, 1970), etc. In what follows immediately I will be concerned with Scanlon’s view.

something else, and I can see, without believing it, that it would, if it were the case, be such a reason”(My emphasis).¹⁴⁸

Scanlon insists this does not mean that one must have an independently specified inclination or disposition to do what one has reason to do, or what one takes oneself to have reason to do, as the Motivation-first views might assume. Believing that one has good reason to ϕ is sufficient to motivate one to ϕ . *Contra* the Motivation-first view, the fact that things may go wrong, i.e. the fact that one may recognize that one has good reason to ϕ without being motivated to ϕ , does not mean that when in fact one is motivated to ϕ one has a disposition, etc., whose scope is specified independently of the recognition that one has a good reason to ϕ .¹⁴⁹ Again, in Scanlon’s own words: “...a rational person who judges there to be a compelling reason to do A normally forms the intention to do A, and this judgment is sufficient explanation of that intention and of the agent’s acting on it...”¹⁵⁰

To take a real-life example, on these views (which I shall be calling from now on “Reasons-first” theories) to count as being motivated to pay taxes to make up for basic political inequalities one must be disposed to pay taxes, because one believes that making up for basic political inequalities is a good reason for paying taxes. In other words, to count as action motivation, one’s disposition *to do A to do B* must be specifiable as the disposition to do what is in accordance with one’s belief about one’s good reason. To explain action motivation as such is to reveal it to be subject to one’s beliefs about what one has a good reason to do.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 56.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 35.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 33

One common objection against this view is that it portrays the agent as a square, to use one of Velleman's phrases; in other words that it ignores the possibility of acting intentionally in or out of *akrasia*, apathy, depression, etc.¹⁵¹ Scanlon responds that "Even when desire in the directed attention sense runs contrary to our reason (that is to say, our judgment) in this way [i.e. in the way of *akrasia*], however, it remains true that the motivational force of these states [desires] lies in a tendency to see some consideration as a *reason*. *Akratic* actions (and irrational thoughts) are cases in which a person's rational capacities have malfunctioned, not cases in which these capacities are overmastered by something else, called desire."¹⁵² So on Scanlon's view it is possible to act contrary to one's judgment about the reasons one has, but only because one sees competing considerations as reasons, when one shouldn't. Even in this case, one acts intentionally to the extent that one exercises one's rational capacity, however badly. One does not count as exercising one's capacity badly because of an external impediment or interference, but because of an *internal* malfunction. The idea of an internal malfunction of a rational capacity, a malfunction that is not due to an external impediment or interference, is especially mysterious. It is exactly this mysteriousness which is exposed in the objection that this conception of action motivation does not make room for primary motivational conflict.

As Scanlon himself recognizes, derivative motivational conflict is on this picture perfectly plausible: "I can take my hunger to be a reason for getting up and at the same time recognize my fatigue as a reason not to get up, and I am not necessarily open to rational criticism for having these conflicting attitudes." This possibility would presumably explain the possibility of *akrasia*. But, Scanlon continues, "...judgments conflict by making incompatible claims about the same

¹⁵¹ See Velleman, 1992.

¹⁵² Scanlon, 1998, p. 40.

subject matter, and attitudes that conflict in this way cannot, rationally, be held at the same time. ... I cannot simultaneously judge that certain considerations constitute good reason to get up at six and that they do not constitute good reason to do this”¹⁵³ (My emphasis).

If, that is, the structure of intentional action is the structure picked out in rationalizations of the form “I’m doing A because I’m doing B,” and action motivation is to be understood as the motivation “to do A to do B”, then to be in primary motivational opposition towards one and the same action would, on a view like Scanlon’s, involve the following: judging at the same time that certain considerations (i.e. doing B) constitute good reason to do A, and that they do not constitute good reason to do A. If to be motivated to do A to do B one *must* judge that doing B constitutes good reason for doing A, then to be motivated to both do A to do B and not do A to do B, one would have to be judging both that doing B is a good reason to do A and that it is not a good reason to do A at the same time. Primary motivational conflict would, in the best possible case, merely constitute the expression of a contradiction. This would be to assimilate primary motivational conflict to a simple logical blunder. And so the sense in which the conflicting agent might count as being in two minds about one and the same action would be merely a sense in which the agent is in no mind about anything at all. To reduce primary motivational conflict to a simple logical mistake would thus not be any less reductive than reducing it to derivative motivational conflict.

Against this objection one could venture the following defense. We might be able to allow for the possibility of primary motivational conflict and still support the view that to be motivated is to be disposed to do what one judges one has good reason to do, even on a Thompsonian

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 24-25.

conception of the elementary structure of action, if we abandon Scanlon's assumption that reasons are primitive.¹⁵⁴ This is how Scanlon himself explains the primitiveness of reasons: "I will take the idea of a reason as primitive. Any attempt to explain what it is to be a reason for something seems to me to lead back to the same idea: a consideration that counts in favor of it. 'Counts in favor how?' one might ask. 'By providing a reason for it' seems to be the only answer." If we stick with the explanatory primitiveness of reasons talk, primary motivational conflict will be impossible. Suppose we grant that the scope of reasons is not further specified by reference to something further they *do* or *are*; for instance suppose we cannot specify what it is for x to be a reason for y by referring to the fact that x is pleasurable or prudent, or in any such way. Then, the minimal criterion for the individuation of reasons would have to appeal to a principle which would disallow the possibility of primary motivational conflict: i.e. that if at time t and in circumstances z, x is a reason for y-ing, then at time t and in circumstances z, x is not a reason for not y-ing. This is the reason why Scanlon stresses that one and the same consideration cannot constitute a reason both for and against one and the same action at the same time.¹⁵⁵ To allow for this possibility we have to abandon the primitiveness of reasons.

If we give up the idea that reasons are primitive, we may be able to claim that a consideration may count in favor of an action by providing a *pro tanto* reason for it; by showing, that is, what is pleasurable about it, or prudent about it, etc. and thus gives one a reason to do it which may be outweighed by other reasons.¹⁵⁶ Primary motivational conflict may once more

¹⁵⁴ Scanlon, 1998, p. 18.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 24-5.

¹⁵⁶ Raz for instance seems to hold a similar view. He says "We want to do or to have something only if we believe that it has some aspect that makes it worth-while, makes it good or valuable. We want what we want in as much as it has that good aspect. We may at the same time want not to do the action or not to have the object inasmuch as they have other properties that make them worthless or bad." (Raz, 1999a, p. 54)

seem possible, for now we may take it that doing B is a good reason to do A *in so far as doing B is pleasurable*, and doing B is not a good reason to do A *in so far as doing B is imprudent*. And one may be motivated towards both doing A to do b and not doing A to do B at the same time in the way of primary motivational conflict.

But now the question that arises is how firmly a *monolithic* account can hang on to the existence of different *kinds* of reasons. For if the respects in which considerations may count in favor of actions count in favor of actions in so far as they are reasons, only of different kinds, we need to ask what this difference will come down to. In other words, we need to ask whether these reasons will be comparable in terms of reason-hood, even if we grant that they are not measurable in these terms.¹⁵⁷ If they are comparable with respect to reason-hood, if it is possible to determine how each respect of reason-hood fares when compared to each other, then the ensuing judgment will be a practical judgment that action motivation will have to be in accordance with. And the question of primary motivational conflict would arise once more in relation to this second order motivation. Would it be possible for one to judge at the same time that one and the same action is both rational and not rational from the higher order perspective of the comparison of the respects of reason-hood? Given that primary motivational conflict is often conflict about what choice to make, and not just between competing considerations or feelings, and also that the higher order practical judgments are especially concerned with choice in the face of the applicability of different *kinds* of reasons, we should not limit primary motivational conflict to conflict between competing *pro tanto* reasons. If these *pro tanto* reasons are comparable in terms of reason-hood and so higher order practical judgments can be made with

¹⁵⁷ For one precise definition of comparability see Chang, 1997. For another elaboration of the notion see Raz, 1985-6.

regard to them, then we should allow primary motivational conflict to enter into the terrain of these higher order judgments. For this higher order conflict to be possible, one would have to be judging at the same time that a consideration counts both as a sufficient reason for and a sufficient reason against one and the same action, which is now impossible in a way that cannot be remedied by abandoning the primitiveness of reasons.

We may, on the other hand, suppose that the respects in which a consideration counts in favor of an action, i.e. pleasure, prudence, etc., constitute incommensurable reasons. To suppose that pleasure and prudence in the example are incommensurable *reasons* is not merely to suppose that there is no underlying value in terms of which they can be precisely measured (as per Wiggins' characterization mentioned in the previous section). It is to suppose that pleasure and prudence are incomparable in so far as their reason-giving power is concerned. In other words, that there is no single standard of reason-hood by which they can be compared.¹⁵⁸ In this case, the relation "being a good reason for" would be a mere dummy. For what we would be judging in judging e.g. that doing B is a good reason for doing A, and that doing B is not a good reason for doing A, is that doing A to do B would be pleasurable, and not doing A to do B would be prudent.

In this case, to say that action motivation is subject to practical norms to the extent that it ought to be in conformity with reason-hood is in reality to say that it is subject to practical norms to the extent that it ought to be in conformity with pleasure, or prudence, etc. But this would turn the monolithic Reasons-first account into a multi-dimensional account. For now action motivation would be subject to standards deriving their normative authority from

¹⁵⁸ For more on the notion of incomparability see Raz, 1999 and Chang, 1997.

incommensurable requirements of practical rationality.¹⁵⁹ I will deal with this variety of multi-dimensionalism in my last chapter. I will argue there that this multi-dimensional view is inadequate because it forces on us an unsatisfactory account of choice.

2.2.2.2 Reasoning-first Monolithic Theories. One could at this point suggest that the Reasons-first views fail to allow for the possibility of primary motivational conflict because they mistakenly assume that they have to drive a – however minimal – wedge between the disposition to judge that something is a reason and one’s motivation to act. One could further suggest that driving a wedge between these two notions led us to the assumption that a disposition to ϕ counts as an action motivation only if ϕ figures in the content of our judgments in a particular way: i.e. under the guise of the relation “being a good reason for.” One could claim that the Reasons-first views seemed forced to suppose that the form of action motivation – the way it is determined by practical requirements – is its conformity with the content of the judgment that one has good reason to ϕ , because they could not see that they did not have to drive a wedge between practical judgment and motivation. Instead they could have supposed that the form of action motivation just is the form the practical judgment and not its content; i.e. the way the reasoning of which the practical judgment is the conclusion is determined by practical requirements.

So, to correct this problem, what I shall be calling the Reasoning-first family of theories suggest that the form of action motivation is not conformity with the content of one’s judgments concerning one’s reasons, but the form of practical reasoning itself. On this suggestion, action motivation is determined by practical requirements in the way that practical reasoning is

¹⁵⁹ Raz for instance asserts: “Obviously to judge a belief, desire, emotion, etc. as rational is to note that having them is at the very least consistent with a successful deployment of our capacity for rationality. The standard by which success is to be measured is far from clear. It is doubtful that there is only one standard employed on all occasions.” (Raz, 1999, p. 74)

determined by practical requirements, and not by the fact that it must be in conformity with the content of the conclusion of practical reasoning. On this family of views, action motivation should not be conceived of as what follows from, or is in conformity with, one's practical judgments, but as the very activity of coming to judge that one has reasons to do something. To explain action motivation as such would then be to ultimately reveal it to be subject to the requirement to reason correctly about what to do.

On the Reasoning-first views there is no wedge between coming to recognize *doing B as a reason for doing A* and being motivated *to do A to do B*. On the contrary, to come to recognize doing B as a reason for doing A just is to be motivated to do A to do B. Coming to recognize that doing B is a reason for doing A may be to reason practically to the conclusion that doing A to do B is desirable, choice-worthy, good, required, etc., depending on the details of the theory of practical reasoning we choose. On any such account, reasoning practically to the conclusion that doing A to do B is desirable, choice-worthy, etc. is the activity of justifying doing A to do B. As Nagel stresses, "A first person, present tense practical judgment about what one should do is not merely a belief. It is not, of course, an action either. *To be led by certain reasons to such a judgment is to accept those reasons as a justification for doing or wanting that which it is judged one should do or want*"¹⁶⁰ (my emphasis). Later on the same page he continues "Hence I contend that the judgment that one has reason to do something includes the acceptance of a justification for doing it, and that this is its motivational content." On his view, to reason practically to the judgment that one ought to perform an action is to accept the justification for performing the action that is judged as to be done. To accept this justification just is to be

¹⁶⁰ Nagel, 1970, p. 65.

motivated to do it. In Nagel's own words this acceptance is the *motivational content* of the practical judgment that one should perform the action in question.

Depending on our preferred view of practical reasoning, the activity of coming to recognize a reason for ϕ -ing, or the truth that doing B is a reason for doing A, or reasoning practically, or justifying doing A to do B, may be a matter of doing one of the following:

- 1) Deriving the desirability of doing A to do B from more general truths about desirability in accordance with a non-instrumental practical principle governing this derivation.¹⁶¹
- 2) Tracking or perceiving normative facts in the world.¹⁶²
- 3) Making theoretical inferences about what is good to do.¹⁶³

Of course the list might go on. What matters for my purposes here is that for a view to fall under this list it should have the following characteristics. (1) It should suppose that to be motivated to ϕ just is to come to recognize a reason for ϕ -ing, or accept a justification for ϕ -ing. (2) It should assume that coming to recognize a reason for ϕ -ing, or accepting a justification for ϕ -ing, should be understood as an activity which is guided by standards of correctness. (3) It should suppose that the source of these standards of correctness is a single requirement. (4) It should suppose

¹⁶¹ Nagel might for instance be taken as a proponent of this view, and Kant's categorical imperative the model for the necessary principle. When Nagel talks about the motivational efficacy of reasons at the beginning of *The Possibility of Altruism*, he says: "...their [the reasons'] motivational efficacy may derive not from the conditions themselves [the conditions of the existence of the reasons], but rather *from the principle which governs the derivation of reasons from those conditions*" (my emphasis) (Nagel, 1970, p. 32).

¹⁶² Proponents of these views are hard to locate, because for the most part philosophers of this persuasion tend to pass over the question of the singleness of the normative source of motivation in silence. But something like this view could be developed out of material that Jonathan Dancy for instance provides, although Dancy himself is a multi-dimensionalist. (See Dancy, 2000.)

¹⁶³ This is the intellectualist view commonly attributed to Davidson (on the basis of his account of weakness of will in Davidson, 2001) and Socrates in the *Protagoras*. I believe that this attribution is mistaken in both cases, but this is beside the point. (See for instance Nussbaum, 1984, esp. p.63. for the attribution of this view to Socrates in the *Protagoras*; but see McDowell, 2009, esp. p. 75-76 for an alternative interpretation.)

that the single requirement is a non- instrumental principle of rationality, for reasons discussed in my second chapter.

On any such account then, to be disposed to do A to do B will be explained as an action motivation to the extent that one is thereby shown to track a purportedly normative fact in the world; or one is thereby shown to make a deductive inference to a practical judgment about a particular action; or to apply a fundamental categorical principle of practical reason to oneself when deliberating about what to do in a particular situation, etc. To allow for the possibility of primary motivational conflict we would have to assume either of the following: either that both the disposition to do A to do B and the disposition to not do A to do B could at the same time constitute the activity of tracking purportedly normative facts in the world, or that they could constitute the activity of making a deductive inference to an evaluative judgment about a particular action, or that they could constitute the application of a categorical principle of practical reason to oneself. It would seem to follow from this that if our capacity to be active in one of these ways was not merely malfunctioning, then the independent normative structure of the world would be such as to make impossible demands on us all the time; or that *anything* would follow from our deductive inferences (as it would not be bound by the law of non contradiction); or that the practical principle governing our deliberation about what to do would be entirely incapable of prescribing *any* action.

One will readily object that the view that one should be taken to count as being motivated to ϕ to the extent that one reasons practically to ϕ is only subject to the above objection, if reasoning practically is taken to issue in *unconditional* practical judgments that doing ϕ is valuable, desirable, etc. But, the objection will go on, reasoning practically may be interpreted

as what issues in *conditional* judgments that one ought to do ϕ *in so far as* ϕ is χ , ζ , etc., where χ , ζ , etc. may be different or merely distinct aspects of *pro tanto* value or desirability. Now we could suppose that one can at the same time *both* be motivated to do A to do B – because one may for instance *come to judge* that one has reason to do A to do B *in so far as doing A to do B is* χ – *and* be motivated to not do A to do B – because one may for instance *come to judge* that one has reason to do A to do B *in so far as doing A to do B is* ζ . For instance, I may come to judge that I ought to get another beer to drink it, because doing so would be pleasurable, and I may at the same time judge that I ought to not get another beer to drink it, because doing so would be unhealthy or non-pleasurable. This solution raises similar problems as the solution in the previous section. For now, should we take these aspects to be commensurable with respect to value, or not?

If we take them to be commensurable in the sense that they are comparable with regard to value, then presumably the activity of comparing them will constitute a form of reasoning which will once more issue in judgments about one's reasons or about what is valuable, desirable, etc. Given this possibility for practical reasoning, to limit primary motivational conflict to conflict between reasoning that issues in conflicting *pro tanto* reasons would be to expel primary motivational conflict from the terrain of choice and confine it to the narrow bounds of mere clash of attractions. As I argued in the last section, we have no reason to do that. To include primary conflict in the terrain of choice would, on this picture, be to conceive of it as conflict between reasoning that one and the same action is and is not sufficiently valuable; which would once more be impossible.

If on the other hand we take these aspects to be incommensurable with respect to value,¹⁶⁴ in the sense that reasoning itself cannot determine which aspect is more valuable, or which value ought to be chosen, then primary motivational conflict might seem to once more be both perfectly possible and reasonably constrained to conflict between judgments about *pro tanto* reasons. One would now be able to both come to judge that one *pro tanto* ought to do A to do B in so far as it is χ , and that one *pro tanto* ought not to do A to do B in so far as it is ζ , at the same time.

But how should we interpret talk of *the respect or the aspect* in which doing A to do B is χ ? There are two ways to do this. One way is to take χ to be just another (non final) action description, which can figure further along the line of the rationalizing order of means-end

¹⁶⁴ These aspects may constitute either incommensurable values or incommensurable aspects of one and the same value, in something like the way that Hurka proposes in Hurka, 1996. What matters for my purposes here is that these aspects must be incomparable through reasoning, whatever they happen to be aspects of (i.e. independently of whether they happen to constitute incommensurable values or incommensurable aspects of a single value in particular). Of course when arguing for the compossibility of monism with incommensurability of value Hurka refers to a much weaker conception of incommensurability, on which what is not possible is not comparison through reasoning, but compensation for the loss of value; or as he calls it, choice between incommensurable aspects without rational regret. At any rate I believe that even this weaker conception of incommensurability is untenable against the background of monism of value. Hurka argues that regret for a lesser good is rational even when this good is an instance of the same generic good, as long as it is a distinct good from the good actually chosen, and is therefore rational even given a monistic theory of the good. But I believe that Hurka's suggestion implies that rational regret is in order about almost all the choices one makes. Hurka deals with this objection when he discusses Nussbaum's bagel objection, on which if distinctness of value were enough for rational regret then rational regret would be in order even in cases of choosing one identical bagel over another. To this Hurka responds by pointing out that the distinctness of one and the same value which justifies rational regret must be understood as distinctness in intrinsic properties. (See Hurka, 1996, p. 566.) But if we grant this criterion of distinctness, then we should have to suppose that it is rational to feel regret almost about all of our simplest everyday choices. I drive to work in the mornings and at a certain intersection I often think about whether to go left or right. The routes are not dramatically different from one another, but they are nevertheless not identical in their intrinsic properties. If I go this over that way I will come across different people, cars, houses, different small or big surprises, etc. Should I feel regret about choosing to take one route over the other? But it seems that most of our mundane, everyday choices are on a par with the route and not the bagel case. Does it follow that is rational to feel regret almost all the time? To block this objection we should clearly add to Hurka's account of the distinctness of value in order to justify rational regret. We should add that distinct values in the required sense are distinct in their intrinsic value-properties and not merely in their intrinsic properties. But this will either be to abandon the thesis of value monism (i.e. to say that distinct values belong to distinct types of value) or to say something trivial (i.e. to say that the values that have distinct value properties are distinct).

descriptions that constitutes the elementary structure of the action in question. Or we could take χ to be the *specific* guise under which means and end descriptions have been thought together in the means-end synthesis: the final term in the instrumental, rationalizing order.¹⁶⁵ In the former case, to claim that one is motivated to ϕ because one comes to judge that one has a reason to do A to do B, in so far as doing A to do B is χ , just is to claim that one comes to judge that one has reason to ϕ to χ . What is purportedly an instance of primary motivational conflict would then really be nothing but an instance of derivative motivational conflict between the motivation *to ϕ to χ* and the motivation *to not ϕ to ζ* . One could always object by saying: “So be it then! On a reasonable conception of the connection between motivation and practical rationality, all motivational conflict ought to turn out to be derivative motivational conflict if it has to.”

But this response is not available to a Reasoning-first theorist. For if we take χ or ζ to be another (non final) term further along the series of rationalizations, then, as I argued at the end of section three when dealing with the Motivation-first views, to assume that all motivational conflict is derivative is to assume that practical reasoning must go on *ad infinitum*. But, I argued there, to assume that all practical reasoning must go on *ad infinitum* is to assume that practical deliberation and explanation never come to an end. In the case of Motivation-first views I argued that this assumption would prevent us from ever determining to what extent a given disposition realizes the disposition that makes us agents. Thus, I argued, we could never determine to what extent a given disposition to ϕ might be rational.

The spirit of this argument is applicable here as well. Here is how it would work. (1) A disposition to ϕ is explained as an action motivation to the extent that one thereby comes to

¹⁶⁵ See Chapter One, section six above.

judge that one ought (or has reason) to ϕ to the extent that ϕ -ing is χ -ing. (2) The series of “I’m ϕ -ing in so far as ϕ -ing is χ -ing” rationalizations is infinite (for if χ could be the final term in the series, one would be able to be conflicted about both doing ϕ to do χ and not doing ϕ to do χ in the way of primary conflict). (3) So χ -ing cannot be the final respect, or sense in which ϕ -ing is justifiable. From (1), (2) and (3) it follows that (4) one could never come to determine what reason one has for ϕ -ing. For it could always turn out that at some distant point in the rationalizing order, to ϕ might just turn out to be to ζ , such that one ought to judge that one ought not to do ϕ in so far as it is ζ . In what sense would practical reasoning be reasoning if it prevented us from ever determining the reasons for ϕ -ing?

There is an alternative. I said above that we could propose that χ -ing and ζ -ing above, i.e. the respects in which one judges that doing A to do B is or is not reasonable, are *distinct* (in Hurka’s sense, assuming Hurka is right) *or different incommensurable guises* of means-end syntheses; i.e. that they are incommensurable requirements of practical rationality. If for instance we take χ -ing to be “getting pleasure” and ζ -ing to be “being prudent” then we can say that primary motivational opposition is indeed possible. For now one may at the same time *both* be motivated to do A to do B – because one comes to judge that one has reason to do A to do B under the guise of “coming to judge that one has reason” which is determined by the final constitutive goal of “getting pleasure,” *and* be motivated to not do A to do B – because one comes to judge that one has reason to not do A to do B under the guise of “coming to judge that one has reason” which is determined by the final constitutive goal of “being prudent.” These incommensurable respects would thus constitute incommensurable requirements of practical rationality to which practical reasoning would be subject.

This interpretation of the sense in which practical reasoning issues in judgments about incommensurable values or aspects of one value is an interpretation that abandons the distinguishing assumption of the monolithic views. If to be motivated to act just is to reason practically about what to do, and practical reasoning is subject to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality, then action motivation will also be subject to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality. I will consider these multi-dimensional views in the final chapter.

2.3 CONCLUSION

In sections one through three, I argued that none of the monolithic accounts of the necessary connection between action motivation and practical rationality can allow for the phenomenon of primary motivational conflict. This was the rough structure of the argument:

- 1) Premise from previous chapter: We have reason to suppose that ϕ -ing (where ϕ -ing is an intentional action) should be understood as a matter of *doing A to do B, doing B to do C, etc..*
- 2) Platitude about motivation: It appears that there are cases in which one is both motivated to ϕ and to not ϕ non-derivatively at the same time.
- 3) Argument of this chapter: One and the same agent cannot be motivated in contrary ways towards one and the same means-end synthesis, at the same time, if the guise of this synthesis is determined by a single commensurable requirement of practical rationality.

- 4) Conclusion: Therefore intentional action must be subject to incommensurable¹⁶⁶ practical requirements.

Now I can suggest that the “guise of a means-end synthesis” above is the “respect in which” one and the same subject may be moved towards and away from an object in Plato’s principle. I can also venture the hypothesis that the first premise can be mapped onto Plato’s claim that some desire for drink is not for good drink but for drink *simpliciter*. Plato’s claim, that not all desire for drink is for *good* drink, is commonly taken to be a rejection of the Protagorean dogma that all desire is for the good. I believe there is another, more fruitful interpretation of his claim. On this interpretation, what Plato means to point out is that there must be a level of *analysis* of actions, on which we can think of the relation between doing A (getting a drink) and doing B (quenching one’s thirst) as a bare etiological relation (in the manner of the Thompsonian picture of the instrumental structure of agency), without needing to add a further specification of the *character* of the means-end connection or synthesis that holds the two kinds of descriptions together. On this reading, Plato would not be denying any Protagorean thought, for he would not be claiming that there must exist actions which are not thought of under the guise of the practical requirement to do what is good. With these two interpretative suggestions granted, we can see that the argument of this chapter has the same rough structure as Plato’s argument in the *Republic*.

This was roughly the structure of the Platonic argument. Appearance: A thirsty man may both yearn for a drink and thus be moved towards it, and be pulled back from drinking by something which forbids him to do so and thus be moved away from it. Clarification: Not all desire for drink is desire for good drink. Principle of Opposites: One and the same subject

¹⁶⁶ The sense in which they are incommensurable will depend on the details of the multi-dimensional theory we will choose.

cannot do or suffer opposites, in the same respect, towards the same thing and at the same time. Conclusion: These movements must originate in distinct sources of movement or parts of the soul. This goes, I think, some way towards showing both that Plato's argument is not as bad as commentators usually suppose, and that it may not be exactly the argument they suppose it is.

If we grant the conclusion of my argument in this chapter, it *may* appear that we should either suppose that we cannot explain action motivation in terms of non-instrumental practical rationality or abandon the idea that primary motivational conflict is possible. But as I suggested at various points, there is an alternative. We can both develop an account of action motivation or intentional action in terms of practical rationality *and* allow for the possibility of non-derivative motivational conflict if we abandon the assumption that action motivation and intentional action must be subject to a single, commensurable requirement of practical rationality. We can suppose, in other words, that the guise of the means-end synthesis (which constitutes the elementary structure of intentional action) may be determined by incommensurable practical requirements.

It also transpired in the course of this argument that there is more than one interpretation of the form of action motivation: the way in which action motivation is subject to practical requirements. Depending on what interpretation we favor we will end up with a different multi-dimensional view. A multi-dimensionalist could for instance suggest, following the model of the Motivation-first views, that action motivation may be subject to the practical requirement to maximize incommensurable agent-general dispositions; and that this would be the way in which action motivation is subject to incommensurable requirements. Others could suggest on the model of the Reasons-first theories that action motivation may be subject to the practical

requirement to be in conformity with practical judgments about incomparable (in terms of reason-hood) *pro tanto* reasons; and that this would be the way in which action motivation is subject to incommensurable practical requirements. Yet others could suggest following the model of the Reasoning-first theories that action motivation may be subject to incommensurable requirements in the sense that practical reasoning is subject to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality.

In any case, all multi-dimensional theories, all theories on which action motivation or intentional action is subject to incommensurable practical requirements, will have to explain intentional action *as the object of choice, and not merely as eligible for choice, in the face of conflict between these incommensurable practical requirements*. In the final chapter of my dissertation I will show that we can assess the various multi-dimensional accounts on the basis of their answer to this explanatory demand. And I will argue that the incommensurable practical requirements may all issue in choice, because they constitute potentially cognitive responses to the world. What makes choice in conditions of conflict between these incommensurable practical requirements possible is that practical reasoning is determined by them in the way of a distinctive self-consciousness; consciousness of oneself as reasoning under the guise of the right requirement for the circumstances, which when things go well may constitute practical knowledge.

3. MULTI-DIMENSIONAL THEORIES OF ACTION MOTIVATION AND THE UNITY OF INTENTIONAL ACTION

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In the second chapter I argued that monolithic theories of motivation cannot make room for the possibility of primary motivational conflict. To allow for primary conflict we have to conceive of action motivation as multi-dimensional. In the course of the argument it transpired that each monolithic theory suggests a different interpretation of *the form* of action motivation: the way it is determined by the constitutive requirement of practical rationality. Multi-dimensional theories develop as a reaction to each of these monolithic theories, and so their conception of the form of action motivation varies accordingly. In this chapter I will argue that action motivation is subject to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality *in the way* that practical reasoning itself is subject to incommensurable requirements of practical rationality. And I will argue that the *form* of practical reasoning and hence of action motivation is the *form* of practical self-consciousness; self-consciousness on the part of the agent as determined in her reasoning about what to do by the right practical requirement for the circumstances; such that when things go well it constitutes practical knowledge of oneself as correctly determining what to do. What exactly this form is will I hope become clearer towards the end of the chapter.

In the second sub-section of this introduction I will distinguish between the following multi-dimensional families of views: material and formal multi-dimensional views. In the third sub-section I will show that both versions of multi-dimensionalism need to give a normative account of choice in conditions of conflict between incommensurable practical requirements, in the face of this incommensurability. In the fourth section of this chapter I shall show how typical material multi-dimensional theories posit the will as an extra practical capacity (along the incommensurable action-determining practical requirements), as the true bearer of intentionality. But, I shall argue, they fail to give a normative account of intentional action as the object of choice.¹⁶⁷ In the fifth section I will argue that the formal multi-dimensional views posit a *genuine* or *ideal* form of practical reasoning, as what constitutes *choosing* an action, and I will show that these accounts are also inadequate.¹⁶⁸ In the final section I will present an alternative. To explain intentional action as the object of choice and not merely as eligible for choice in the face of conflict between incommensurable requirements of practical rationality we need to appreciate the following. (1) That the multiple requirements of practical rationality are incommensurable in the sense that one cannot determine in advance how they trade off each other in all possible contexts of choice. (2) That in reasoning practically the agent is self-conscious of the *purported* fact that her reasoning is determined by the right practical requirement for the circumstances. (3) That practical reasoning may nevertheless issue in choice even in conditions of conflict because, when things go well, in reasoning practically the agent is rightly conscious of herself as being determined in her reasoning by the right practical requirement for the circumstances. In other words because the form of self-consciousness on the part of the agent as engaged in the right guise of reasoning in the circumstances may amount to practical knowledge; i.e. knowledge of

¹⁶⁷ Proponents of this view are Jay Wallace, Joseph Raz, to name but two.

¹⁶⁸ Proponents of this view are Sergio Tenenbaum and Christine Korsgaard.

oneself as determining correctly what to do. So the self-consciousness characteristic of each guise of practical reasoning may constitute choice, even if its constitutive standards are incommensurable, because it potentially constitutes practical knowledge.

3.2 MATERIAL AND FORMAL MULTI-DIMENSIONAL THEORIES.

In the second chapter I argued against the Motivation-first and the Reasons-first theories, among other things. According to the former, a motivation to ϕ counts *as such* because it realizes a specific agent-general disposition. According to the latter a motivation to ϕ counts *as such* because it is in conformity with one's judgment that one has good reason to ϕ . I argued there that there is no room in these monolithic conceptions for primary motivational conflict. I also pointed out that these families of theories can account for motivational conflict if they abandon the assumption of monolithicity.

I also suggested that a multi-dimensional Reasons-first theory can advance the following claim: for an action motivation to count *as such*, it must be in conformity with one's *conditional* judgment that one has reason to-do-A-to-do-B *in so far as doing-A-to-do-B is χ , or ζ , or ψ , etc.*; where χ , ζ , ψ , etc. (or x^* , x^{**} , x^{***} , depending on whether Hurka is right about monism about value)¹⁶⁹ are incommensurable respects of desirability, value, worth-whileness, etc., in the sense that they are not comparable in respect of reason-hood.¹⁷⁰ Alternatively, an advocate of a multi-dimensional Motivation-first view may suggest that for a given disposition to count as a

¹⁶⁹ Hurka, 1996.

¹⁷⁰ See Raz, 1985-6.

motivation to act, it must realize one of the maximizing but incommensurable¹⁷¹ dispositions to y, z, etc., which collectively form the set of the agent-general dispositions. So, for instance, to explain being motivated to-do-A-to-do-B *as such* might be to reveal it to be in accordance with one's judgment that doing B is a good *pro tanto* reason to do A *in so far as pleasure, or prudence, or etiquette, etc. is concerned*, or to reveal it to realize one of the (collectively) agent-general dispositions.

On the monolithic Reasons-first views, action motivation must be in accordance with one's judgment about one's *comparable* (sufficient) reasons. On the multi-dimensional Reasons-first views on the other hand, action motivation must be in conformity with a conditional judgment about one's incomparable (*in terms of reason-hood*) *pro tanto* reasons. In both cases the *form* of action motivation is determined by the fact that it must be in conformity with one's judgment about one's reasons. What differs is the specific character of these reasons, and so the matter of action motivation. On the monolithic Reasons-first views, these reasons are comparable as far as reason-hood is concerned, and on the multidimensional Reasons-first views they are incomparable as far as reason-hood is concerned. Similarly in monolithic and multi-dimensional Motivation-first views, the form of action motivation is determined by the fact that it must realize an agent-distinctive disposition. The difference is that in the former case this disposition is a single, agent-general disposition, whereas in the latter case it forms a set of agent-general dispositions together with other dispositions.

I call these two multidimensional theories material because while they respectively accept the Motivation and Reasons-first accounts of the *form* of action motivation, they deny the

¹⁷¹ These would be the dispositions which cannot be measured by a measure M of ϕ -ness, where M is a scale of measurable units and ϕ is the property of realizing an agent general disposition.

Motivation and Reasons-first account of the matter of action motivation. On the multi-dimensional version of the Reasons-first view for instance, the *matter* of action motivation (what the action motivation is motivation towards) is not the action *qua object of choice*, but the action *qua eligible for choice; i.e. qua recommended by incommensurable aspects of worth-whileness*. But, on both monolithic and multi-dimensional versions of both families of views, the form of action motivation (i.e. the way it is determined by practical requirements) is the same: it comes down to *conformity* with the content of one's practical judgments in the Reasons-first case, and *approximation to* agent-general dispositions in the Motivation-first case.

In chapter three I also argued against what I called the monolithic Reasoning-first views. On this family of theories, the form of action motivation just is the form of practical reasoning which issues in all-out practical judgments. In other words, the form of action motivation is the way in which practical reasoning is determined by the single commensurable requirement of practical rationality. To abandon this assumption of monolithicity, I argued in that chapter, multi-dimensional views *cannot* suggest, like the Reasons-first views, that the practical reasoning in question issues in *conditional* practical judgments about *incommensurable respects of desirability let's say*. For, I argued there, these incommensurable respects of desirability cannot fall within the elementary instrumental structure of action as merely *further* (non final) end-descriptions of the action. Instead, I argued, the incommensurable respects of value or desirability must be interpreted as incommensurable requirements of practical rationality to which the means-end syntheses are subject. Now the question is *How* is action motivation or practical reasoning determined by incommensurable requirements of practical rationality? In other words, how should the multi-dimensionalist accounts conceive of the form of action motivation? According to the variety of views that I shall examine later on in section 3.3.2, the

incommensurable requirements of practical rationality constitute incommensurable *forms* of practical reasoning. I.e. practical reasoning is determined by practical requirements in incommensurable ways.

If the incommensurable respects thus specify incommensurable *forms* of practical reasoning and the form of action motivation just is the form of practical reasoning, it follows that action motivation must itself take incommensurable forms. For instance, to say that one reasons practically to the conclusion that one has reason to-do-A-to-do-B *in so far as doing so is pleasurable* is to say that if one reasons practically *under the form of practical reasoning constituted by the aim or guise of pleasure*, then one will conclude that one has a reason to-do-A-to-do-B. Similarly, to say that one is motivated to-do-A-to-do-B in so far as doing so is pleasurable is to say that one is motivated in accordance with pleasure *and* one is motivated to-do-A-to-do-B.

I call these multi-dimensional views *formal* and not *material*, even though both formal and (at least the Reasons-first) material accounts may trade on the idea of the conditionality of reasons on incommensurable aspects of value or incommensurable values. The reason is that on material multi-dimensional theories, the matter of action motivation is the matter that the monolithic Reasoning-first views also suggest: the action qua the (potential) object of choice, and not the action as merely eligible for choice in the face of conflict between incommensurable forms of practical reasoning. The difference between the multi-dimensional and monolithic versions of the Reasoning-first variety is that on the former, the *form* of action motivation *itself* (the way in which it is determined by (incommensurable) practical requirements) is multiple. In contrast, on the Reasons-first multi-dimensional views it is the matter of action motivation which

is determined by incommensurable aspects of practical worth-whileness. To sum up, there are at least two families of multi-dimensionalist views about the way in which the guise of action motivation¹⁷² is subject to incommensurable practical requirements. On material multi-dimensionalism the thought of means together with ends descriptions is subject to incommensurable practical requirements materially: i.e. what is determined by these incommensurable requirements is the matter, the content of this thought. On formal multi-dimensionalism, the thought of means together with ends descriptions is subject to incommensurable requirements formally; i.e. what is determined by these requirements is the form of this thought, the way this thought is determined by these requirements.

3.3 THE QUESTION OF CHOICE

The main point of chapter two then was to bring forth a fatal disadvantage of monolithic theories: that they cannot allow for primary motivational conflict. What I did not mention though is that these views have a terrific advantage: they can give a single story about the form of action motivation and the form of intentional action; i.e. the way in which practical norms determine action motivation and intentional action *as a potential object of choice, and not merely as eligible for choice, in the face of conflict between incommensurable requirements of practical rationality*.¹⁷³ If intentional action qua chosen just is what action motivation issues in, and action motivation is determined as such by a single (commensurable) practical requirement, then it follows without further ado that choice will be determined as such in the same way. (Depending

¹⁷² This is, as I've said before, the way in which the means and end descriptions are thought together in means-end syntheses.

¹⁷³ In what follows to avoid this lengthy specification I will simply refer to this type of intentional action as *intentional action qua chosen*, or *qua the object of choice*, or simply, when it is appropriate as *choice*. I will explain exactly what this sense is shortly.

on the theory we prefer, choice may be determined either by desire or by the content of practical judgment or by practical reasoning itself.)

If we reject the monolithic theories of motivation in favor of multi-dimensional theories, we risk losing this terrific advantage. If we side with the material multi-dimensionalist views, we risk losing this advantage, because, on these views, action motivation does not issue in intentional action *qua potential object of choice*. This is so because, as I said in the previous sub-section, material multi-dimensionalists of the Reasons-first variety for instance suggest that practical judgments (with which action motivation ought to be in conformity) are judgments about incommensurable reason-giving aspects of the action. If the form of action motivation is its conformity with one's judgment about one's incommensurable *pro tanto* reasons, and in cases of primary conflict one's conflicting motivations are in conformity with incommensurable *pro tanto* reasons, then choosing what to do in these conditions will have to be more than merely being motivated to do it. If, for instance, the Reasons-first material multi-dimensional theories are right and primary motivational conflict is conflict between judgments about incommensurable *pro tanto* reasons, *and* normatively constrained choice is possible even in conditions of such conflict, choice must be something over and above the conformity of action motivation with conditional incommensurable practical judgments. The same is true for the Motivation-first multi-dimensional accounts as well. Therefore, after having settled the issue about the constitution of action motivation, the material multi-dimensional theories will have to answer the further question: *What constitutes choice if not what constitutes action motivation?* This question is of course urgent only if we assume that we ought to give a normative account of choice in these conditions; if, that is, we want to explain how we can *rightly* or *wrongly* decide between reasons that are incommensurable. But the question now is: should we really want this?

One could for instance claim that choice is simply what a conditional, incommensurable practical judgment issues in when there is no competing action motivation and the existing action motivation issues in action. What happens in conditions of choice is that one of the conflicting motivations merely wins out, and this we call “choice.” This solution excludes the all too familiar possibility of normatively constrained choice in conditions of conflict, or between conflicting practical judgments. Should we accept it? Even if we grant that normatively constrained choice is not apparently possible in conditions of conflict, I believe that we should not accept a non-normative account of choice for the following reason. There is an intuitive sense in which practical reasoning is reasoning about what *to do*, and not about what it would be good, desirable, pleasurable, prudent, etc. to do, as the Reasons-first views seem to suppose.¹⁷⁴ Paraphrasing Korsgaard’s criticism of instrumentalism, we typically do not first come across, or choose a way of acting (e.g. as prudence requires, or as pleasure or etiquette requires, etc.) and then scramble around for some way to fulfill it.¹⁷⁵ Alternatively, we do not scramble around for some way to fulfill what would be prudent, pleasant, well-mannered etc. to do, and then either randomly, or causally or out of choice come to do one of these things. Instead, what we typically do, when we are in the business of reasoning about what to do, is reason *both* about what would be the pleasant thing to do, *and* about whether to do what’s pleasant. It is this conception of practical reasoning that can carry out the promise of not altering beyond recognition the sense in which practical reasoning is reasoning about *what to do* and not merely about *what it would be pleasurable, prudent, etc. to do*. To salvage this conception the material multi-dimensional

¹⁷⁴ Of course someone like Watson could claim that practical reasoning just is thought about what would be best, most valuable, desirable, etc. to do. (See, for instance, Watson, 2003, p. 176). But biting the bullet is generally no argument against the fact that what one bites is something that could kill.

¹⁷⁵ See Korsgaard, 2009, p. 221.

views would have to provide an account of the way in which choice is determined by norms over and above the way action motivation is determined by norms.

One could at this point suggest that if we side with the Reasoning-first variety of multi-dimensionalism, i.e. the formal multi-dimensionalist views, we will not have this problem. The reason, one might claim, is that, as I said, on these formal views the practical reasoning is an all-out judgment about what one ought to do and not a conditional judgment about the respect of desirability of an action. The matter of action motivation on a Reasoning-first view is, as I said, the intentional action *as the (potential) object of choice* and not the action as eligible for choice under an incommensurable (aspect of) value.¹⁷⁶ Thus these formal accounts may seem to respect the intuition inspiring the monolithic views that practical reasoning is reasoning about what *to do* and not about what *is* desirable, valuable, etc. to do.

But things are not this simple. On the formal views, action motivation is takes incommensurable forms, and so, if the form of choice just is the form of action motivation, then choice will have to be multi-form as well. This possibility seems to once more compromise the sense in which action motivation issues in intentional action *qua (potential) object of choice*. For on this formal version of multi-dimensionalism, in cases of primary conflict, different forms of action motivation will simply issue in different forms of choice and so in different forms of intentional action. If choice takes different forms, the following question arises: how, in the face of conflict of forms of choice, is it possible to choose how to choose? Are the standards of this higher order choice the standards of one of the forms of first order choice or not? If yes,

¹⁷⁶ Otherwise, as I mentioned in the previous subsection (and argued against in chapter three) the respect in which an action is judged as pleasurable or prudent, etc. would constitute another end-description within the elementary etiological structure of action.

then so much for the supposed incommensurability of the forms of choice. And if no, then the multi-dimensional Reasoning-first view may give us a normative account of how intentional action is determined as the object of choice in general, but *not* in conditions of primary motivational conflict.

In other words: if practical reasoning takes more than one form, it will issue in different forms of choice and different forms of intentional action, depending on what we take to be the condition on which practical reasoning each time rests. Practical reasoning will at best issue in intentional action qua the disjunction of the incommensurable objects of choice. So for instance, if we take the condition of one form of practical reasoning to be pleasure, then practical reasoning under the guise of pleasure will issue in *appetitively intentional* actions; and if we take the condition to be prudence, then practical reasoning under the guise of prudence will issue in *prudently intentional* actions. At this point we can rest our case with a disjunctive conception of intentional action on which choice is a disjunctive term signifying distinct and incommensurable forms of choice and intentional action. Or we can attempt to answer the question of the unity of intentional action, and explain what in the incommensurable (*individual*) *determinations* of practical reasoning by practical requirements unites them under the category of intentional action.

I believe that we should not rest with a disjunctive interpretation of the unity of intentional action, on which there are incommensurable forms of choice. For if we did, we would be limiting practical reasoning to reasoning about *what* appetitive-intentional or *what* prudent-intentional thing to do, overlooking the capacity of reasoning to guide us with respect to *whether* to do the appetitive *or* the prudent thing. And so there would be an important sense in which

reasoning wouldn't be able to guide us with respect to what *to do*. In other words, the capacity of practical reasoning to guide our actions would be limited to informing when we would be excused with respect to a given standard (say prudence, pleasure, etc.). But when we reason practically we reason about what to do and not about how to escape criticism.

In what follows I will examine material and formal multi-dimensional accounts in turn and show that their answers to the question of choice are inadequate. At the end I will suggest that each (*individual*) *determination* of practical reasoning by incommensurable practical requirements potentially constitutes choice. The reason is that choice is the form of a distinctive self-consciousness: the agent's consciousness of herself as determined in her reasoning by the right practical requirement for the circumstances, which when things go well constitutes knowledge of oneself as rightly determining what to do in the circumstances. First let me take up material multi-dimensional views.

3.3.1 *Material Multi-dimensional Accounts of the Unity of Intentional action.* I said above that the material multi-dimensional views need to answer the question of what determines choice in conditions of conflict if it is not the form of action motivation; the way action motivation is determined by the requirements of practical rationality.

This has often been interpreted as *the requirement for an extra capacity of choice in the face of the incommensurability of reasons*.¹⁷⁷ The same interpretation could be applicable in the case of the incommensurability of the agent-distinctive dispositions. From now on I shall drop reference to the latter type of material multi-dimensionalism, but the criticism should be taken to apply to it no less than the Reasons-first variety. If the reasons that figure in the content of

¹⁷⁷ See for instance Holton 2006 p. 7; Watson, 2003, p. 181-3; Raz, 1999a, ch. 3; etc.

one's practical judgments are merely incommensurable *pro tanto* reasons, practical judgment itself will not be fit to adjudicate between these incommensurable reasons. This is to say that if practical judgments are judgments about the incommensurable respects of reason-hood of actions, the verdicts of practical reason will constitute mere *suggestions* about what is to be chosen. If these respects are incommensurable, practical reason itself will not be fit to take us from these suggestions to choice, at least not in conditions of conflict. This is the sense in which practical reason does not issue in intentional action *qua the object of choice*, in the case of material multi-dimensionalism. In addition, then, to our *deliberative* or *reasoning* capacity, the material multi-dimensional views typically suppose that we need an *executive* capacity: one that will take us from incommensurable *pro tanto* practical reasons to intentional actions as the (potential) object of choice (reflected in all-out judgments, whatever their exact nature). This extra executive capacity is what I shall from now on be referring to as *the will*.¹⁷⁸ On the material multi-dimensional views, the question of choice is settled by reference to the exercise of a capacity other than action motivation (as on the corresponding monolithic theories): the capacity to execute the verdicts of one's practical judgments.

The general shape of this solution is the following: practical judgments are about actions in so far as they have some incommensurable reason-giving aspect. So practical judgments, in Raz's terminology, *merely make options eligible*; they merely specify what's up for choice.¹⁷⁹ To

¹⁷⁸ Even though I should note that this is not the only name it comes by. Watson for example uses the term "decision" (Watson, 2003), Holton uses the name "choice" (Holton, 2006), Wallace the term "volition" (Wallace, 2006), Pink often uses the name "intention formation" (Pink, 1996), etc.. From now on I will use the term *the will* to refer interchangeably to all these concepts, because they play the same fundamental role in all these theories: the role of an extra, executive capacity over and above the capacity to form judgments about the reasons one has; a capacity which is necessary because reasons are taken to be incommensurable.

¹⁷⁹ In Raz's words, "...the most typical exercise or manifestation of the will is in choosing among options that reason merely renders eligible. Commonly when we so choose, we do what we want, and we choose what we want, from among the eligible options." (Raz, 1999a, p. 47)

get to intentional action, at least in conditions of agency, we need an *extra* capacity, the will, whose function is to choose among the incommensurable alternatives or, more generally, to execute the verdicts of practical reason. Paradigmatic practical rationality is then the composite exercise of the functions of two separate capacities: the first is the *rational* capacity to recognize reasons and the second is the *practical* capacity to act on reasons.¹⁸⁰ Intentional action as the object of choice is essentially that which one's *practical* capacity (one's will) determines.

This general account raises the following question: what is the connection between one's rational and one's practical capacity? In other words, what is the connection between judging about one's practical reasons and willing? Depending on their answer to this question I will distinguish between three broad categories of theories: internalism, externalism and reformism.¹⁸¹ Internalists suppose that the connection between the will and one's practical judgment is necessary; i.e. that the form of the will is determined by the principles which determine one's practical judgments.¹⁸² Externalists take the will to be in principle, at least,

¹⁸⁰ Pink is very explicit about this two-factor conception of practical rationality. In Pink's own words: "First practical rationality requires a *deliberative* capacity – a capacity by which the agent can recognize rational requirements on action. This first kind of capacity is exercised in the formation of judgments about which actions are desirable - the practical judgments whereby one recognizes justifications for action. ... Secondly practical rationality requires an *executive* capacity – a capacity by which the agent can *apply* rational requirements on action. Without such an executive capacity, the agent's rationality would hardly be practical. How is this capacity exercised? There is one obvious way, at any rate. It is exercised, at the very least, in our first-order agency - in the very performance of the actions which practical reason requires." (Pink, 1996, p. 103)

¹⁸¹ In doing so, to some extent I follow Watson. Watson's classification concerns the different answers to the question of the connection between the good or the choice-worthy and the will. My issue here is with the connection with the judgment about one's reasons and the will. The distinction between the two classifications may seem trivial, for on the views I'm examining the judgments about one's reasons are ultimately judgments about desirability or the good. But, the distinction is not trivial. For on Watson's construal Korsgaard's account would fall under the internalist accounts because practical reasoning is for her reasoning with a view to the good. But on my classification Korsgaard's account would not fall under internalism, because for Korsgaard the will is essentially connected with the good via the connection of the good with the process of arriving at practical judgments and not the content of those judgments. (For more on the difference between the latter two connections see my second chapter.)

¹⁸² See for instance Buss, 1999; Owens, 2000, etc.. I'm talking here about reasons-judgment internalism. For more on this distinction see Setiya *forthcoming*.

entirely unconstrained by one's practical judgments.¹⁸³ Reformists distinguish between two senses of the will; a thin and a thick sense. On the thin sense the will is always constrained by reasons, and on the thick sense the will is not constrained by *sufficient* reasons.¹⁸⁴ In the remainder of this section I will consider these alternatives in turn, and show that they all fail to give a satisfactory account of choice. Let me first take up internalism.

There are two main varieties of internalism. On the first, our will is controlled by reasons in the same way that our practical judgments are controlled by reasons. In other words, on this picture, the will is nothing other than our deliberative capacity *in its unconditional exercise*; the capacity which issues in unconditional judgments about one's reasons, and so judgments about intentional action *as the object of choice*, and not as falling under a respect of value or practical worth-whileness.¹⁸⁵ On another variety, the will *as such* could directly cause anything at all, but the will *as a bearer of agency* is constrained by our practical judgments.¹⁸⁶ On the former variety, our will is conceived of as a mere species of practical judgment, and on the latter, as the genus under which the agential species of the will falls; i.e. the species of the will which is restricted by practical judgments.

The drawback of the first alternative is that it fails to portray the will as an essentially executive capacity as it purports to. On this view, the will is nothing other than *another* practical

¹⁸³ See for instance Wallace, 2006; Pink, 1996, etc.

¹⁸⁴ See for instance Raz, 1999a; Watson, 2003.

¹⁸⁵ This is for instance the way Pink envisions the internalist model he argues against. In Pink's words, on the internalist variety "...the reasons which move us to take a decision to act are our reasons for performing the action upon which we decide." (Pink 1996, p. 142) Pink attributes this view to Davidson. Whether he is right in this attribution is beside the point.

¹⁸⁶ Owens for instance claims that "In principle, the will could directly cause anything at all. But the mere fact that something is produced by my will, that my will motivates it, does not put me in control of it." (Owens, 2000 p. 80) while emphasizing that "...our control over both will and deed, over decisions and agency, should receive a common explanation in terms of their connection with *practical judgment*." (Owens, 2000, p. 82)

judgment along with the practical judgments about one's *pro tanto* reasons, which is controlled in the same way by our reasons or our sensitivity to reasons. But even if we grant the possibility of the formation of unconditional practical judgments against the background of the incommensurability of reasons, there is no reason to suppose that even the unconditional judgment that one has reason to-do-A-to-do-B will ever actually issue in action. For now we can imagine that one's conditional practical judgments may go against one's unconditional judgment. In this case we would have to assume that there is a higher order practical judgment that would play the role of the will, and adjudicate between one's unconditional and one's conditional judgment. But, in this case too we can imagine that another or the same conditional judgment could go against this higher order judgment that would play the role of the will, and then we would need a still higher order judgment to adjudicate between the two judgments, and so on *ad infinitum*.

The reason we face the threat of infinite regress is the following: if the will is subject to the same normative constraints as our conditional, *non-executive* practical judgments, then its executive function will depend solely on its role as an adjudicator of conflict. Any principled way of determining which judgment should be the adjudicator (such as the principle that this practical judgment should be about one's all things considered reasons for the action) will fail, in the face of the simple fact that any practical judgment which is not governed by this principle may nevertheless go against this *executive* judgment. In this way, any conflicting judgment will cancel out the *executive* nature of the judgment-adjudicator, thus creating the need for a new way of specifying what counts as the exercise of the executive capacity, and hence for a new principled way of distinguishing between executive and non-executive judgments.

On the other hand, the version of internalism which presents the will as a species of a generic capacity for movement merely postpones the real question. For the drawback of the view that practical judgment is what issues in intentional action *as the object of choice* was not that judgments *as such* cannot issue in intentional action. The problem was that practical judgments cannot issue in choice *if they concern incommensurable pro tanto reasons*; i.e. if they register one's recognition of the *incommensurable pro tanto* reasons for an action. To say that this problem is solved if we suppose the existence of a *generic* capacity to be moved, which may on occasions be constrained by one's conditional practical judgments about incommensurable reasons, is to assume that the problem was that practical judgments cannot as such move on their own. But if the problem is the one I stressed both here and in the previous section (i.e. that conditional judgments may of course move to intentional action but may not move to intentional action *qua the object of choice*; at least not in conditions of primary conflict) then to propose that there is a generic capacity to be moved which may be constrained by those judgments is to merely postpone the question. For now the question can be recast in these terms: if the generic capacity to be moved is constrained by one's judgments about one's incommensurable *pro tanto* reasons, then this capacity will not issue in intentional actions *qua the object of choice* either, but only *qua falling under an incommensurable respect of reason-hood*; i.e. *qua prudent, pleasant, etc.* This possibility may, as I said in the introduction to the question of choice, be seem to be non-problematic when it comes to choice in conditions of singleness of motivation, but not in conditions of conflict between incommensurable conditional judgments. But this impression is false. For if the capacity to be moved to act is constrained by the same incommensurable reasons that one's practical judgments are about, choice even in conditions of non conflict will still at best be a matter of one practical requirement merely taking over, and at worst a random

determination by specific incommensurable requirements. For instance, if prudence is taken to be an incommensurable respect of reason-hood, then in reasoning practically under its guise one will be able to reason about what prudent thing to do, but one will not be able to reason about whether to do the prudent thing or not.

In each case, both varieties of internalism fail to explain how the will may be both an *extra* practical capacity (i.e. capable of being specified in a non-trivial way; i.e. not merely by pointing out that it is the capacity which issues in choice) and a *distinctively* practical capacity (i.e. issuing in intentional action *qua the object of choice and not qua recommended by incommensurable respects of reason-hood*), as long as they suppose that the exercise of the will issues in *further* practical judgments *alongside* one's other (conditional) practical judgments.

Let me now turn to the externalist view. On the externalist variety, the will is essentially a non-normative attitude. As Jay Wallace concisely puts it,

“Choice may often reflect or be based on normative commitments that the agent accepts, but it cannot be *identified* with such commitments without foreclosing genuine possibilities in the theory of action. There has to be something in the act of choice that distinctively goes beyond normative commitment if we are to leave room for *akrasia* and the other forms of irrationality to which action is characteristically subject.” (Wallace, 2006, p. 87)

Leaving worries about *akrasia* and irrationality aside, the distinctive claim of externalism is that the will *qua bearer of agency* is not a normative attitude.¹⁸⁷ As before, there are two main varieties of externalism. On the first, which I will be calling *volitionalism*,¹⁸⁸ the will is

¹⁸⁷ I add the qualification “qua bearer of agency” to distinguish this view from the second variety of internalism above. Given that the will is generally referred to as the capacity for intentional action though, I will drop this qualification from now on.

¹⁸⁸ This version is propounded by Wallace, 2006.

identified with a distinctive kind of want or volition, which has two features: (a) it is not constrained by one's judgments about one's reasons or one's normative attitudes in general, and (b) it cannot be captured in the causal flow of one's causally efficacious psychological attitudes. On the second variety, which I shall be calling the *Action model*,¹⁸⁹ the activity of the will is to be identified with a special sort of deliberative action, which itself is subject to *distinctive* practical norms.

Let me take up volitionalism first. When describing the commitments of volitionalism Wallace says that "we do not think of choice as an essentially normative stance, and this is connected with our feeling that our active powers of self-determination in the practical domain present us with a set of alternatives for action that is wider than the set of actions we ourselves approve of."¹⁹⁰ The motivation for this view of the will is the search for a moment which can *break into* the normative flow of judgments about reasons and the causal flow of desires; a moment which qua breaking in will manifest the freedom of the agent from the constraints posited by each type of flow, a moment of self-determination. As Wallace puts it, "The question of what action we are going to perform is not necessarily answered by our having determined to our own satisfaction what it would be best to do."¹⁹¹ Nor is it determined, on volitionalism, by the causal powers of the psychological states, to which we are subject.¹⁹² Instead, it is determined by "us". And "we" are identified with the will understood as a normatively and

¹⁸⁹ For a detailed defense of this variety see Pink, 1996.

¹⁹⁰ Wallace 2006, p. 95.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 94.

¹⁹² See for instance Wallace 1999, p. 238.

psychologically unconstrained volition, as a state of self-determination unpolluted by subjection to normative and psychological determinations.¹⁹³

The problem with this conception of the will is that it cannot perform the function it was originally meant to perform. Remember that the introduction of the will as an extra capacity seemed necessary because it appeared to be what could turn a rational capacity into a *practical* rational capacity; i.e. a capacity to get us from our incommensurable conditional practical judgments to choice. If we assume that this extra capacity is entirely unconstrained by our practical judgments,¹⁹⁴ then we should not suppose that its addition is what turns our capacity to *recognize reasons* for and against particular actions into the capacity to *choose*. For all we know, it is possible that our “autonomous” will (in Wallace’s sense of self-determining volition, of course) might never side with our practical judgments. In what sense then would this addition be the capacity which turns our rational capacity into a *practical* rational capacity?

One might object to my thought here by suggesting that this case is no different than the case of a person who suffers from severe paralysis and as a result can never actually execute her practical judgments. Would we say that in this case as well the person does not have a rational practical capacity? No. The objection misses the point, for in the former case it is conceivable that an agent could have the capacity for self-determination without having the capacity for recognition of reasons at all. If the definition of self-determination is purely negative (i.e. if self-

¹⁹³ As Kieran Setiya pointed out to me Wallace need not embrace full indeterminism; he can for instance give a deterministic story on some non-psychological, neuroscientific level.

¹⁹⁴ To be fair Wallace does mention that “...there are complex and important connections between choice and normative concepts. Thus, in cases in which we choose at variance with our better judgment there must be something that makes the action chosen seem attractive, an eligible candidate for performance from the agent’s point of view, and this will typically be a function of our normative cognitions.” And later on the same page “In practice of course, cases of non-normative choice are the exception rather than the rule” (Wallace, 2006, p. 97). But, as Watson rightfully complains (Watson, 2003, p. 181) “Why, ‘of course’?”

determination is defined as freedom from normative constraints) then it is true that the condition will be satisfied when the agent does not even have the capacity to be subject to normative constraints, i.e. when the agent does not have a rational capacity at all. If having a will is thus independent from having a rational capacity, it cannot be part of its function to get us from conditional judgments about practical reasons to choice.

A similar problem threatens the second version of externalism. On the Action model, the determinations of the will are themselves actions, which are subject to distinctive practical norms.¹⁹⁵ The actions in question are the conclusion of reasoning about what decision to make, or in other words, how to determine one's will. In Pink's words, "...the Action model says that decisions to do A are justified by desirable ends which deciding to do A would further."¹⁹⁶ The problem, as Pink himself acknowledges,¹⁹⁷ is that if willing, or deciding to perform an action, is itself an action subject to different norms than the norms to which intentional action is subject, then there is no reason to expect that the will's function might be constrained by one's conditional practical judgments. For it might very well be the case that the norms to which the will's actions are subject are completely unrelated to the norms that govern one's practical judgments about one's intentional actions. And then there would be no reason to expect that these higher order norms should have to coincide with some of the norms governing the agent's practical judgments.

¹⁹⁵ See for instance Pink, 1996, p. 17.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 9.

¹⁹⁷ "The Action model seems inconsistent with the view that the essence of deciding to perform an action is executive – that decision-making serves to apply practical reason as it concerns the actions decided upon." (Ibid., p. 10) Of course, this is not the only sort of objection to this theory. Williams, for instance, protests that "a decision is not a special kind of action ..." (Williams, 1995b, p. 36) and that we come to this conclusion because we think that "The self can act (at one time rather than another, now rather than earlier) only by doing something – the thing it does, willing." (Williams, 1995b, p. 71).

If we choose to restrict the norms guiding our deliberations concerning the actions of the will to the norms guiding our practical judgments, as Pink for instance does, we may manage to explain why the will's function is constrained by one's conditional practical judgments, but only at the cost of reverting to a disguised form of internalism, and to its problems. If on the other hand, we do not restrict the norms guiding our deliberations concerning the actions of the will to the norms guiding practical judgments, but suppose instead that the actions of the will *typically* execute the verdicts of our practical judgments, we end up with a disguised version of Wallace's externalism and its problems.¹⁹⁸ Externalism may manage to explain in what sense the work of the will is distinct from the work of one's practical judgments in a way that avoids the problems of internalism, but it cannot explain why it should nevertheless be that distinctive work's *function* to execute some of the verdicts of our practical judgments. In other words, it does not manage to answer the particular question of choice that the material multi-dimensional views face; the problem of how we get from incommensurable conditional practical judgments to choice. What are we to do?

It may appear that the solution to these problems is to take a course that will steer clear of both the Charybdis of internalism and the Scylla of externalism, by accepting a reformist view. On this reformist view, as I said above, we may make a distinction between two senses of the will. In the thin sense, the will is constrained by conditional reasons, and in the thick sense the will is unconstrained by sufficient reasons. Raz himself says that "In this [the thin] sense to say

¹⁹⁸ Pink for instance hints at this alternative when he says that "One can form intentions which are not accompanied by any conviction that what is intended is desirable. One can form intentions which are not actually explained by concomitant practical judgments at all. Nevertheless, the capacities for practical judgment and intention are still possessed together, because the core function of intention formation is to apply or execute our practical judgments about how we should act." (Pink, 1996, p. 23) But if one can 'form intentions', i.e. will in a manner which is entirely unconstrained by the norms guiding our practical judgments, then it is not clear what it means to say that the core function of the will is to execute our practical judgments.

that I did something because I wanted to do it... is to mark the action as intentional, that is, as an act I did for a reason.”¹⁹⁹ In the thick sense the will is what colors the way we do anything we do intentionally. (For one and the same intentional action can be done reluctantly, grudgingly, enthusiastically, etc.) The will in the thick sense is also what can determine which actions, emotions, thoughts, etc. we have, either when reason determines which one is the best all things considered to have, or when reason presents merely incommensurable alternatives between which it (reason) cannot choose.²⁰⁰ When reason determines what is the all things considered best thing to do the will in the thick sense may nevertheless determine one to perform the action there is *lesser* reason to perform. When reason presents merely incommensurable alternatives, the will in the thick sense may determine us to perform whatever action (from those suggested by reason) we happen to want. In both cases, there would be some reason we would be acting in conformity with, and so in acting for a reason we would be determined by the will in the thin sense.

In either case, it is important to note that this view differs from the externalist views above in emphasizing that the activity of the will is an activity constrained by *at least* one of the reasons registered by our practical judgments. It differs from the internalist views in allowing that this activity may at the same time be unconstrained by reasons, if by reasons we mean to refer to sufficient reasons. For it is possible that one may choose, will, that is, against one’s

¹⁹⁹ Raz, 1999a, p. 109. One could suspect that Raz wants to say that willing an action is itself a reason. But this goes against the spirit of Raz’s entire project which is to show that reasons are provided only by considerations of worth-whileness, appropriateness, the good, the valuable, etc. and not psychological states *as such*. On the reasonable interpretation of this passage, to say that I did something because I wanted to is to say that willing it was the determination to action in accordance with reasons.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 110-11.

good or best reasons, and against reasons that are neither better nor worse than the reasons one chooses or wills in accordance with. Raz summarizes his view in the following way:

The view that I have outlined can be summarized by saying that the will is the capacity for intentional action, which is instantiated in every intentional action. This gives rise to the thin sense of 'want': I do what I want to do whenever I act intentionally. The will is also the ability to be attached to various options, actions, or objects, which expresses itself in the attitude with which we do what we do, and which enables us to choose, even when, as is normal, reason does not dictate a unique choice. This second power of the will gives rise to the thick sense of 'want', meaning an attachment not required by reason (though we can be attached in that way to an option prescribed by reason, as well as to one proscribed by it).²⁰¹

Raz's solution is ingenious. While it brings in the will as a *distinct* executive capacity to bridge the gap between incommensurable conditional practical reasons and choice, it explains the difference in the possible exercises of the will as a consequence of the nature of the *rational* capacity. Where reasons speak in one voice and point to one action, the will's function is *thin*. Where reasons speak in more than one voice or point to more than one actions, the will's function is *thick*. It is the ingenuity of the solution that is also its biggest fault. It is true that on this picture the will is portrayed as a capacity whose function is determined non-negatively unlike the case of the voluntaristic version of the will above. For, on Raz's picture, the will is *not* that which is *not constrained* by reasons (even in the case of good reasons). On the contrary, the will is that which is *necessarily constrained* both by reasons and by other types of commitments. This is how choice, or willing, against one's best reasons or choice, or willing, in the face of incommensurable reasons is to be explained.

²⁰¹ Ibid, p. 111.

In both cases the definition of the function of the executive capacity is not negative. But it is not positive either, for it is *ad hoc*. Let me explain why. On Raz's picture, the function of the will is defined solely in terms of the function of the *distinct* capacity to reason. It is defined ultimately as that which fills in the gap there is between rationality and choice. It may of course turn out that we have a capacity to act which fits this definition of the will as what makes up for the incapacity of reasons to reach all the way out to choice. But material multi-dimensionalism professed to *explain* the nature of the connection between practical reasons and choice by *identifying* a distinctive capacity, not to merely posit the connection by *positing* that there is a distinctive capacity which carries it out.²⁰²

Until a better theory of material multi-dimensionalism is forthcoming, a theory which actually explains and not merely posits the connection between practical reasons and choice in a satisfactory way, we have to suppose that material multi-dimensionalism is wrong. The reason can of course not be multi-dimensionalism itself, for without it we could not explain the possibility of motivational opposition, which I think we should be able to. The reason must then be the assumption about the form of action motivation that the material multi-dimensionalists share with the monolithic Reasons-first views: that one's action motivation must be in conformity with one's judgments about one's reasons. (One's incommensurable reasons in the case of multi-dimensionalism, and one's conclusive reasons in the case of the monolithic views.)

3.3.2 *Formal Multi-dimensional Accounts of the Unity of Intentional Action.* In section two above I claimed that multi-dimensionalism can embrace the fundamental claim of the

²⁰² Kieran Setiya suggested to me an even stronger objection on which Raz's account does not give an independent or direct account of why the will has to be constrained by reasons at all if it is not also constrained by sufficient reasons, and I think that even though this is true, the weaker objection is sufficient to raise doubts about his view.

Reasoning-first views, that the form of action motivation is the form of practical reasoning, i.e. the form of the activity which issues in practical judgments, and not the correspondence with the content of these judgments. On this claim, to be motivated to act just is to reason about how to act; that is, to reason practically. Formal multi-dimensionalism would then be the view that there are several forms of practical reasoning – ways in which practical reasoning is determined by practical requirements – that are not commensurable.

In section three I pointed out that formal multi-dimensionalism may appear to avoid the problem of material multi-dimensionalism – the inability to explain how practical reasons connect with intentional action *as the object of choice* and not merely as eligible for choice in the face of conflict between incommensurable forms of practical reasoning. I also pointed out in that same section that if there is more than one form of practical reasoning and practical reasoning is what issues in intentional action *as the object of choice*, then we will have to accept that there is more than one form of choice and hence intentional action. So, following Sergio Tenenbaum, we may conclude that there are three forms of choice or intentional action broadly understood: fully deliberative, merely intentional and merely voluntary. As Tenenbaum also realizes, and I argue in subsection 3.3, we cannot leave matters at that. We have to explain why these different forms are nevertheless all subject to a certain sort of normative criticism. For if we didn't, we would be assuming that if a particular action is fine by the standards of its distinctive form (e.g. the standards of appetite in the case of the merely intentional form), then it must be fine by any practical standard.

Appetitive actions, for instance, are often not fine at all by the standards of the fully deliberative form of actions, and fully deliberative actions are not fine at all by the standards of

the appetitive form of action or choice. In fact, as I've stressed repeatedly in this chapter, if an action that is fine by the standards peculiar to its distinctive form could not be subject to further normative criticism, we would have no way of normatively resolving cases of primary motivational opposition. But such cases, sometimes at least, do seem resolvable on a normative basis. Think for instance of continent choice in the face of conflict between incommensurable forms of reasoning. Any theory which assumes the existence of distinct forms of intentional action or choice should then have an answer to the question of why one of these incommensurable forms could be subject to criticism from the perspective of the other. If, on the other hand, we refuse to suppose that the incommensurable forms of practical reasoning translate into the existence of multiple forms of intentional action or choice, it may seem that we need to provide an account of choice as the ideal form of *unity of these distinct forms*. This is Korsgaard's suggestion, to which I will come back after I present Tenenbaum's view. As I will suggest in the end, there is an alternative. We do not have to suppose that there are incommensurable forms of practical reasoning in order to accommodate the fact that practical reasoning is determined by incommensurable practical requirements. This is why we do not have to wonder how incommensurable forms of reasoning all may issue in choice. But let me first go into Sergio Tenenbaum's view.

On what Tenenbaum calls the Scholastic view, that in virtue of which all forms of practical reasoning count as such is that they all strive for the good. On this conception, the actions which issue from the different forms of practical reasoning all count as chosen because they are all guided, albeit in different ways of course, by one's general conception of the good. Let me briefly explain how. An intentional action as the object of choice is the conclusion of the agent's practical reasoning, or what carries out the intention which is the conclusion of practical

reasoning.²⁰³ Practical reasoning²⁰⁴ *typically*²⁰⁵ starts from desires, which for Tenenbaum are nothing more than *appearances* of the good, and issues in unconditional, all-out judgments of the good, which are the expressions either of the intentional actions *as chosen* or of the intentions that are carried out by the intentional actions.²⁰⁶

As Tenenbaum notes, these transitions do not all take a single form though. Depending on these different forms, i.e. on the different ways in which one's conception of the good may relate to one's actions, Tenenbaum divides all intentional actions broadly defined, into three categories: the fully deliberated, the merely intentional (narrowly defined) and the merely voluntary.²⁰⁷

On this view, practical reasoning which issues in fully deliberated actions is the transition from appearances of the good to all-out judgments of the good, through the agent's deliberation, which determines that within the perspective of the agent's general conception of the good, no better action is available at that time. Practical reasoning which issues in merely intentional actions is the transition from an appearance of the good to an all-out judgment of the good, without *any* deliberation about whether it is the best available action on the basis of one's general conception of the good. In other words it is an *immediate* transition from an appearance to a judgment, which is nevertheless warranted by one's conception of the good, in the sense that one's general conception of the good has determined that some transitions from appearances to

²⁰³ See for instance Tenenbaum, 2007 p. 11.

²⁰⁴ This term is used by Tenenbaum to designate both the paradigmatic form of inference from an appearance of the good to an all-out judgment of the good which is the intention, and all types of inference from an appearance of the good to an all-out judgment of the good. In what follows I will also use the same term to refer to both kinds of inference. I will be making a special note of it when I'm referring to the former alone.

²⁰⁵ It is plausible though that practical reasoning does not start from desires at all. Actions that in some other sense "start from desire" will be the merely voluntary actions that I will mention later on.

²⁰⁶ "Intentions are most naturally seen in the scholastic view as unconditional evaluative judgments that either are embodied in or precede action" (Ibid., p. 66)

²⁰⁷ In Tenenbaum's words, "Each of these categories will mark *a different way in which one's conception of the good relates to one's actions.*" (Ibid., p. 92) [my emphasis]

judgments should *not* be mediated by deliberation.²⁰⁸ Finally, practical reasoning which issues in merely voluntary actions is the transition to an all-out judgment of the good which is not mediated either by desires or deliberation. This transition is nevertheless warranted by one's general conception of the good, in that it is part of this conception that one's bodily movements should sometimes run more freely than they would if constrained by desire or deliberation.

These different forms of transition or practical reasoning to all-out judgments of the good nevertheless issue in intentional action *qua chosen*, because they all have the good as their formal end; because they all *strive for the good* in a specific way. On this view, there is a generic determination of what it is to reason practically and more specific determinations of the various forms of reasoning practically. On the generic determination, an agent counts as reasoning practically to the extent that she *thereby* strives for what really is good, what is part of her general conception of the good.²⁰⁹ On the more specific determinations, which I presented above, an agent counts as reasoning practically *either* to the extent that the activity of getting to the all-out judgment is guided by deliberation, *or* to the extent that this activity is warranted by her conception of the good. Thus a merely intentional action may be subject *both* to the standards of merely intentional reasoning *and* to the standards of generic practical reasoning.

So, for instance, in moving *immediately* from the appearance that the cake is good to the all-out judgment that it is good, in case one hasn't eaten anything for two days, the agent may be

²⁰⁸ "The scholastic view allows that desires issue in action immediately, but this immediate relation between desire and action must be conceived to be good." (Ibid., p. 97)

²⁰⁹ On Tenenbaum's view, the agent's general conception of the good "is the agent's reflective, all things-considered practical stance. We can say, as a first approximation, that the agent's general conception of the good contains the agent's views on how the various appearances of the good should be taken into consideration in judging what is good. As such, a general conception of the good should include the agent's views on which practical inferences are appropriate, the relation that holds among various practical commitments, relations between various perspectives, and so on." (Ibid., 52-3)

succeeding in reasoning practically in the sense that in this case, judging immediately is warranted by one's conception of the good (starvation is a solid consideration for judging fast about food, for instance). But if the cake happens to be bad, then the agent may be failing to reason practically, in the sense of reasoning practically which is determined by aiming at what is really good and not what appears good. It is thus that all forms of action might be subject to criticism from the perspective of the standards of one's general conception of the good.

But things are not this simple. To say that the good is the formal end of practical reasoning is to say that practical reasoning just is reasoning which determines what is good to do. In Tenenbaum's words, "only the actual exercise of practical reason could determine what the good is, in much the same way that only actual theoretical inquiry could determine the truth."²¹⁰ But what is the "actual exercise of practical reason?"

According to Tenenbaum, "Practical reasoning in this [the scholastic] conception would be employed *primarily* in the reflective formation of a general conception of the good. Upon reflection, we deem appearances illusory or overridden, infer from certain practical judgments to others, and so forth, in such a way as to form a general conception of the good."²¹¹ [my emphasis] It is clear from the above description of the different forms of practical reasoning that the practical reasoning in question is the specific, *deliberative* form of practical reasoning alone.²¹² If all forms of practical reasoning, i.e. reasoning which issues in choice, count as such because they all strive for the good, and this good is determined as such by the exercise of the deliberative form of practical reasoning alone, then it follows that all forms of practical

²¹⁰ Ibid., p. 36-7.

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 75.

²¹² "Because our deliberations aim to form a general conception of the good, they aim to figure out what is good all things considered." Ibid., p. 76.

reasoning count as such because they strive for what the deliberative form of practical reasoning “says” they should strive for.

It would seem then that the merely intentional and merely voluntary forms of practical reasoning count as forms of practical reasoning because they obey the rule of the deliberative form of reasoning. In this case, when they do issue in all-out judgments of the good which are true, they will count as achieving their end, i.e. the good, because they obey the rule of deliberative reasoning, and not because their exercise determines the good. So, even though the non-deliberative forms of practical reasoning may count as aiming at the good, they may not count as having the good as their *formal* end. To the extent though that a form of practical reasoning is determined as such by its formal end, to this extent the non-deliberative forms of reasoning will not count as forms of practical reasoning at all. No matter how much we stress the fact that they still aim at the good, their doing so must be a degenerate form of ‘aiming at the good’.

Therefore, if the formal end of practical reasoning is the good *as such*, and not the good under a further specification (for instance, the good *as determined by the deliberative form of reasoning*), the deliberative form of practical reasoning should be the only genuine form of practical reasoning. The merely intentional and voluntary forms of practical reasoning should only count as degenerate, or as less than full-fledged instances of a single form and not as *distinct* forms of practical reasoning.

Indeed Tenenbaum’s vocabulary often gives this impression. For instance, when he introduces the merely intentional form of practical reasoning he says that “...given that we are limited agents for whom deliberation is often costly, not all actions can be determined by

deliberation...”²¹³ This makes it seem as if merely intentional practical reasoning is admitted as a form of practical reasoning merely because we don’t have much choice. Elsewhere for instance he says that “According to the version of the scholastic view I defend, an unconditional evaluative judgment ought to be formed in accordance with a general conception of the good, a reflective view on the good formed in light of the various perspectives on the good manifested in the various desires of a particular agent. This is not to say that an agent will always form an unconditional evaluative judgment in accordance with her conception of the good but only that *whenever this does not happen her actions fall short of the ideal of rational action.*”²¹⁴ [my emphasis] This is not to say of course that one will thereby be irrational, but it is to say that one will be less than fully rational, which implies that the non-deliberative forms of practical reasoning are less than full-fledged forms of practical reasoning. And again elsewhere, “... a judgment of the good *ideally* should not itself be the immediate consequence of a desire. The move from an appearance to a judgment should be mediated by a more general conception of the good formed on the basis of an evaluation of the various relevant appearances of the good.”²¹⁵ [my emphasis]

To the extent that the non-deliberative forms of practical reasoning count as degenerate, they will not count as distinct forms of practical reasoning, but only as degenerate instances or manifestations or approximations of the single genuine form. But at the same time, to the extent that they strive for what the genuine form of practical reasoning strives for they count as forms of practical reasoning. Therefore, the Scholastic version of formal multi-dimensionalism thrives on an ambiguity between the existence of distinct forms of practical reasoning sharing one thing

²¹³ Ibid., p. 95.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p. 26.

²¹⁵ Ibid., p. 75.

in common and one form of practical reasoning which may be realized more perfectly or imperfectly depending on the circumstances. A better account of formal multi-dimensionalism should manage to explain what the distinct forms of practical reasoning share in common without having to end up presenting the one form as merely a degenerate instance of the other.

This is what Korsgaard attempts to do in her book *Self-Constitution*, by arguing against what she calls the model of the Miserable Sinner: the conception of the virtuous person as the one who “must constantly repress his unruly desires in order to conform to the demands of duty.”²¹⁶ In trying to argue against this model of virtue, Korsgaard in effect argues against a multi-dimensional model of the forms of practical reasoning on which even though there is more than one form of practical reasoning, only one of them is genuine. The others are merely degenerate instances of the one true form. It is this understanding of the distinction of the forms of reasoning as the distinction between the perfect and the imperfect instantiations of a single form which dictates that the virtuous person (the ideally rational person in our case) is the one who should be suppressing the voice of the imperfect or degenerate forms of reasoning in order to conform with the demands of the perfect or genuine form of reasoning. Against this model of the form of practical reasoning, and hence of virtue, Korsgaard proposes a model which promises to explain how the distinct forms of practical reasoning issue in choice, without presenting them as the degrees of realization of a single form; i.e. without presenting the one as a merely degenerate or imperfect instance of the other. But, I shall argue, Korsgaard does not keep her promise.

²¹⁶ Korsgaard, 2009, p. 3.

On Korsgaard's proposed solution, *the form of intentional action as chosen is not simply the form of practical reasoning which issues in it*. This, she takes it, is the assumption which gets Tenenbaum into trouble. Once he has assumed this together with the incommensurability of the forms of practical reasoning, he has to suppose the incommensurability of the forms of choice. And then, to explain the unity of intentional action, in other words what these incommensurable forms of choice share in common such that choice between them must be subject to normative criticism, he has to explain these different forms as degenerate forms of the only genuine form of practical reasoning and action. To deny this foundational assumption Korsgaard makes two ingenious moves. First she supposes that the form of intentional action is the form of a unity.²¹⁷ Then she claims that the form of a unity is a matter of a *certain* arrangement of its parts; i.e. a matter of the constitution of its parts through distinct functions.²¹⁸

Broadly speaking, Korsgaard's argument (like Velleman's and Tenenbaum's) is a function argument. On Velleman's conception, as I said in section 2.2.1, the function of an object A is constitutive of it, in the sense that its addition is what turns another object B, into object A.²¹⁹ The function of an object A is then always *external* to another object B, which forms its basis. On Tenenbaum's conception on the other hand, the function of a type of object A is constitutive of it in the sense that it is determined by the characteristic activity of the best instance of that type.²²⁰ *Once determined* by this activity, it constitutes the goal or the aim of the less perfect instances of this activity. In this sense the function of an object A is *external* to the less perfect instances of its characteristic activity. Korsgaard's view is that the function of an object A is

²¹⁷ "An action is a movement attributable to an agent considered as an integrated whole, not a movement attributable merely to a part of an agent, or to some force working in her or on her." Ibid., p. 3.

²¹⁸ Ibid., p. 27-28.

²¹⁹ Velleman, 1996.

²²⁰ Tenenbaum, 2007.

constitutive of it, in the sense that its function is the activity that the ideal arrangement of its parts, i.e. its collective form, makes it fit for.²²¹ Claims about the function of an object are claims about the internal organization of an *individual* object.²²² An individual is constituted as such when its parts are arranged in the manner that allows it to *do perfectly what it does*; to perform its function. The function of an object is *internal* to its individuality, and not just to the perfect instance of its form.²²³

In some sense then the function of any living thing is self-constitution. The characteristic work of a living thing, the task that lies at hand for it, is to constitute itself as an individual of its kind. And an individual is determined as an individual of its kind to the extent that its matter takes up a *certain* form. This form is nothing but an *ideal* arrangement of its parts or matter.

Similarly in the case of intentional action, an individual intentional action is the characteristic activity of an individual agent, and the characteristic work or function of an agent is to constitute *itself* as an individual agent.²²⁴ An individual agent is determined as an individual

²²¹ “According to Aristotle, what makes an object the kind of object that it is—what gives it its identity—is what it does, its *ergon*: its purpose, function, or characteristic activity. This is clearest in the case of artifacts, which are obviously functionally defined. An artifact has both a form and a matter. The matter is the material, the stuff or the parts, from which the artifact is made. The form of the artifact is its functional arrangement or teleological organization. That is, it is the arrangement of the matter or of the parts which enables the object to serve its function, to do whatever it does that makes it the kind of thing that it is.” (Korsgaard, 2007, p. 27)

²²² When speaking about living beings for instance she says that “The Aristotelian conception that I have just laid out identifies objects as having an internal teleological organization. This is clearest in the case of living things, where the claim is simply about how the living thing’s organs and activities are conceived and explained as contributing to its life. A living thing is not assigned a purpose outside of itself—its “purpose,” or more properly function, is to be what it is, to live its particular form of life. Thus there are no such claims here as that horses are meant for riding into battle or that cows are meant for human beings to eat or that women are meant for housework or that oil is meant for lamps and automobiles. *The teleological claims are made at the level of the individual object: they are claims about its internal organization.*” (Ibid., p. 38) [my emphasis]

²²³ “The teleological claims are made at the level of the individual object...” (Ibid., p. 38)

²²⁴ For instance: “Since being a person, like being a living thing or an animal, is a form of life, being a person is being engaged in a specific form of the activity of self-constitution.” (Ibid., 128-9), “Action is self-constitution” (Ibid., p. 25), “Since the function of action is self-constitution, I am eventually going to argue (Chapter 8) that bad

to the extent that its matter takes up a certain form; to the extent that its parts are arranged in an ideal manner. In other words, an individual agent is determined as such to the extent that each of the parts of the agent's soul performs its distinctive task or function. It is to this extent that the agent acts intentionally. Korsgaard then argues that the parts of the agent's soul are arranged properly for the agent to constitute itself as an individual when the following holds: the rational part of the soul rules, the appetitive part proposes and obeys and the spirited part ensures that the verdicts of reason are carried out.²²⁵ In other words, the agent performs her characteristic activity, i.e. acts intentionally, when the matter of the soul is *informed* by the proper virtue of justice; when the organization of the parts of the soul *is just*. And for the organization of the parts of the soul to be just, each part must perform its own function. The relevant passage is worth quoting in full.

So the function of appetite is to propose and obey, of reason to rule, and of spirit to ensure that reason's decisions get carried out. The parts of the soul are not—at least not when the soul is in order—contenders for power, but rather each has its own work to do, and together they make collective action—that is to say, action—possible. And this explains Socrates' puzzling definition of justice. Justice, he says, is “doing one's own work and not meddling with what isn't one's own” (R 433a–b). When Socrates first introduces this principle into the discussion (R 369e–370d), he's talking about the specialization of labor, and that's what the principle sounds like it's about. But if we think of the constitution as laying out the procedures for deliberative action, and the roles and offices that constitute those procedures, we can see what Socrates' point is. For usurping the office of another in the constitutional procedures for collective action is *precisely* what we mean by injustice, or at least it is one thing we mean. ... *It is meddling with somebody else's work.* (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 147-8)

I argued above that Tenenbaum fails to explain how the incommensurable forms of practical reasoning issue in unified intentional action. Korsgaard's answer not only *allows* that the different forms of practical reasoning have distinct functions *while* allowing for unified action, but *demand*s that the forms of reasoning should have distinct functions *if* they are to issue in

actions, *defective* actions, are ones that fail to constitute their agents as the unified authors of their actions.” (Ibid., p. 32)

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 147.

unified action. This is because on her picture unification is self-constitution and self-constitution is by definition an *ideal* arrangement of parts; i.e. a matter of the constitution of parts through distinct functions.

The parts of the soul, Korsgaard says in the passage above “are not – at least not when the soul is in order – contenders for power, but rather each has its own work to do, and together they make collective action – that is to say, action – possible.”²²⁶ On this interpretation, the three parts of the soul correspond to three distinct stages of *every* individual deliberative action. In the case of a paradigmatically deliberative action the function of each of the parts is, as I said earlier, the following: appetite makes a proposal, reason decides whether to act on it or not, and spirit carries out reason’s decision.²²⁷ This interpretation of the specialization of the functions of the parts of the soul in the unification of the agent is born out of Korsgaard’s interpretation of self-consciousness as the terrain of the partition of the soul. In fact, Korsgaard claims that “Socrates’s emphasis on conflict is slightly misleading, for even if there is no conflict, two parts of the soul can be discerned.”²²⁸

On her conception, contrary to what happens with animals, when we, human beings, desire or fear certain things, we are aware not merely of the fact that we feel certain things but also of the fact that we are inclined to act in certain ways on the basis of these desires and fears. But “...once we are aware that we are inclined to act in a certain way on the ground of a certain incentive, we find ourselves faced with a decision, namely, whether we should to that. We can say to ourselves: “I am inclined to do act-A for the sake of end E. But should I?”” Being

²²⁶ Ibid., p. 147.

²²⁷ Ibid., p. 141.

²²⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

conscious of the fact that we are inclined to act a certain way on the ground of a certain incentive²²⁹ opens a space between the incentive and the response, what Korsgaard calls a “reflective distance,”²³⁰ in which reason is born. In Korsgaard’s words, “Our rational principles then replace our instincts – they will tell us what is an appropriate response to what, what makes what worth doing, what the situation calls for. And so it is in the space of reflective distance, in the internal world created by self-consciousness that reason is born.”²³¹ It is the consciousness of the fact that we are inclined to act a certain way that raises the question of whether we “ought to” act that certain way; the question of reason.²³² On this interpretation this is what it is for reason to rule. It is for it to endorse or reject the proposals of appetite: the incentives we are aware of as inclining us to act a certain way.

To say that reason is operative when we are not determined by alien forces working on us, but when we *can step back* from these forces and *reflect* on what to do, is to side with commonsense. What is not commonsense though is to say that this is where reason is born. In particular, what goes beyond common sense is that reason does not have its own incentives, but merely provides the principle for accepting or rejecting the incentive that comes from elsewhere; e.g. from appetite. Korsgaard herself seems to go against her own words when she repeatedly stresses that on Kant’s picture, which she explicitly endorses, reason provides its own

²²⁹ “The incentive is the thing that presents the action to your mind as eligible; the principle is what determines whether it is in fact to be chosen or not.” (Ibid., p. 22)

²³⁰ Ibid., p. 116. Also: “At the moment, so to speak, prior to choice, you have reflective distance from the incentive, and therefore do not take it for granted that it provides a reason.” (Ibid., p. 123.) And then later on “Reasons arise within the space of reflective distance; to that extent an inward glance is essential to generating them.” (Ibid., p. 124)

²³¹ Ibid., p. 116.

²³² “When we become conscious of the workings of an incentive within us, the incentive is experienced not as a force or a necessity but as a proposal, something we need to make a decision about. Cut loose from the control of instinct, we must formulate principles that will tell us how to deal with the incentives we experience.” Ibid., p. 119.

incentive.²³³ But if reason is *first* born in the reflective distance that self-consciousness opens between the incentive and our response then this incentive cannot be provided by reason. Instead it always has to be provided by something else; appetite, in Korsgaard's view.

On this interpretation, to say that it is the function of reason to rule is to say that it is the function of reason to rule *appetite*; i.e. to choose whether to accept or reject the deliverances of appetite. Similarly, to say that the form of intentional action is the form of unity would be to say that the parts of the soul correspond to the three stages of a fully deliberative intentional action, because for reason to be fully operative, for reason to be able to rule, appetite must offer the matter which reason will endorse or reject, and appetite must obey reason's verdict.²³⁴ So appetite's function must be to propose and obey. And, on this interpretation, because appetite often happens to be disobedient, a third part is formed, the spirited part, whose function is to ensure that reason's verdicts are carried out.

I said above that Korsgaard herself seems to go against her own words when she claims that reason can in fact provide its own incentive. If it can though, there is no reason to suppose that at the first stage of every deliberative action we find appetite making a proposal. Reason should be able to make its own proposal independently of appetite. If reason were able to make its own proposal, the unification of the parts of the soul in action would not have to be a matter of the three parts corresponding to three stages of every deliberative action. It could be the case that a *fully* deliberative action might turn out to be the "result" of the function of reason and reason

²³³ See for instance *ibid.*, p. 22: "It is an essential part of Kant and Aristotle's conception of moral motivation that considerations of duty and the noble must be the source of what Kant called "incentives."" Or *ibid.*, p. 49: "...when an action is disallowed by the categorical imperative—because its maxim cannot serve as a universal law—that thought and the associated feeling of respect provide us with an incentive (respect for law) to perform the action."

²³⁴ The sense in which appetite provides the matter is not the general sense in which sensibility provides the matter for reasoning, but the sense in which appetite is the only source of proposals about what to do.

alone: reason *being* and reason *endorsing* the incentive. It could, that is, be that reason *operates* on appetite's proposals, only when something has gone wrong, and reason has not provided its own incentive or on *some* occasions only. But then the picture of unification that Korsgaard proposes would fall on its knees; or rather onto Tenenbaum's knees. For now we would in effect be reverting to a conception of the more or less perfect manifestations of one and the same function, rather than distinct functions constituting a unity.

To preserve her picture of unity as a unity of distinct functions or parts, Korsgaard could suggest that reason provides its own incentive only in the sense that, when it rejects or endorses appetite's proposals, it does so out of an incentive of its own: respect for moral law for instance. On this alternative, the incentive of reason functions as such *only when* appetite has made its proposal, only when appetite has provided an incentive for action.

But in this case we can always raise the following objection. As I said above, Korsgaard argues against the Tenenbaum style of thought, on which even though there is more than one form of practical reasoning, only one of them is genuine. The true view for Korsgaard is one on which the form of intentional action is constituted collectively by the ideal arrangement of the parts of the soul; i.e. by the ideal exercise of each of the functions of the distinct forms of reasoning. Now the question is: what happens when this ideal arrangement is not fully effected or preserved? What happens for instance when reason rules that appetite's proposals should always or most of the time be embraced? The difficulty of this question is not, as Korsgaard supposes, that "an unjust person cannot act at all, because an unjust person is not unified by constitutional rule."²³⁵ Because in a moderately unjust soul each part still performs its distinctive

²³⁵ Korsgaard, 2009, p. 159.

function, albeit not very well: appetite proposes, reason embraces (where it should reject of course) and spirit carries out. The particular malfunction in this case is that reason should reject appetite's proposal. This should be no problem for Korsgaard at all for as she herself says, "action...is something that comes in degrees: an action can unify and constitute its agent to a greater or lesser degree."²³⁶

The problem with Korsgaard's solution is that if the unjust soul must be to some extent unified in order to act, then what is unjust in the above case of malfunction must be its very unity. For if appetite is recognizable as proposing, reason as ruling and spirit as carrying out, the unjust soul must to some extent, as I said, count as unified. Even when reason almost always rules that appetite's verdicts should be embraced, reason is still recognizable as giving the law. The difference between this and the ideal case is, Korsgaard points out, that in this case reason gives the wrong law. "A city may be governed, and yet be governed by the wrong law. And so may a soul," says Korsgaard.²³⁷ When talking about action performed under this wrong law or bad principle later on she says: "it is action because it is chosen in accordance with the exercise of a principle *by which the agent rules himself* and under whose rule he is – in a sense – constitutionally unified. *It is bad, because it is not reason's own principle*, it does not rule for the good of the soul as a whole, and therefore the unity it produces – at least in the cases of timocracy, oligarchy, and democracy – is contingent and unstable. Reason's own principle, in contrast to all of these, is the principle that truly unifies the soul..."²³⁸ [my emphasis]. Here Korsgaard seems to claim that in both the ideal and the defective case the agent gives herself a law and that what distinguishes the two cases is that in the one, but not the other, the law is good

²³⁶ Ibid., p. 163.

²³⁷ Ibid., p. 161-2.

²³⁸ Ibid., p. 175.

because it is reason's own law. This seems to fly in the face of Korsgaard's earlier declarations that the agent is unified because the agent's constitution says that reason should rule, and not because it is reason that rules. To say that the difference between the ideal and the defective case is that in the former the law is good, i.e. is reason's rule, and in the second it is not just is to say that the ideal and the defective unities constitute *different forms* of unity; such that only one of them is genuine (reason's unity) and the rest (appetite's unity for instance) count as distinct, but less genuine or rational forms of unity and so of intentional action. But this conception faces the same problem as Tenenbaum's view did. For on Korsgaard's conception too it would seem that the distinct forms of choice or intentional action count as distinct forms to the extent that they approximate the only genuine form. To the extent that each constitutes a *degenerate* manifestation of this one genuine form, it constitutes less of a form of unity.

If the form of choice or intentional action as the object of choice is determined as the perfect collective exercise of the functions of the distinct forms of practical reasoning, then the function of each form of choice will be determined in relation to the collective of the functions of the forms of reasoning. If this is so, even if we grant reason its own incentive, it will arise as reason's incentive only as a reaction to an appetitive incentive. And so reason will be *other-*determining, but not *self-*determining. In other words, it will always, in all possible cases, rule over something else ultimately; i.e. appetite. Depending on *how* it rules over appetite (i.e. whether reason gives appetite reason's own law, or reason gives appetite a law reason derives from appetite), it will either give a good or a bad law, and so it will constitute a good or a bad form of unity, and hence a good or bad form of intentional action. So ultimately the ideal state of the soul is a distinctive form of unity which is constituted as such, not by the constitution of the soul, but by the fact that the law of the soul is given to appetite by reason and not by appetite.

Korsgaard's account then is also a disguised version of rationalism, on which even though there are distinct and incommensurable practical requirements, only one of them constitutes true unity, because it is reason's own.

For reason to be self-determining in a way that would make for genuine self-determination and not mere rationalism (which supports the unquestioned rule of reason), reason should be able to be more than its own form; it should also be able to be its own matter. This would only be possible if the unity of intentional action was not determined by the collective exercise of the functions of the distinct and incommensurable forms of reasoning. In the next section I will briefly show how.

3.4 CONCLUSION

In the somewhat lengthy passage I quoted above, Korsgaard says that "The parts of the soul are not – at least when the soul is in order – contenders for power, but rather each has its own work to do, and together they make collective action – that is to say, action – possible."²³⁹ But, I argued that if the unity of intentional action is understood as a matter of collective action – i.e. action whose every stage is under the jurisdiction of one of the parts of the soul – then we will have a hard time arguing, on the basis of considerations of unity alone, that the defective unities (where for instance reason embraces all of appetite's proposals) do not constitute distinct, albeit less genuine forms of unities. To avert this conclusion, I suggested, we have to understand the function of reason as specifiable independently of the prior proposals of appetite. To do this we have to reject Korsgaard's view that reason is born together with the question of *Whether to*

²³⁹ Korsgaard, 2009, p. 147.

endorse appetite's proposals. We have to understand reason as providing its own incentive independently of appetite's incentives. *In other words, reason has to be conceived as capable of issuing in intentional action "on its own."* But then the unity of intentional action will not be a matter of the parts of the soul issuing in action *collectively*. The form of unity of the parts of the soul will not be provided by the image of justice: the image of each "part of the soul" or "form of reasoning" doing its own work in order to constitute action *together* with other parts or forms. Intentional action will not be the result of the *just* configuration or organization of a certain collective (of parts, forms of reasoning, etc.).²⁴⁰

One could suggest that this rejection of Korsgaard's account of unity may once more lead to something like Tenenbaum's view, on which intentional action is what the paradigmatic form of practical reasoning issues in, and the "other" forms of practical reasoning are in reality degenerate manifestations of this paradigmatic form. For, if reason can issue in intentional action all "on its own," it would seem that the "other" forms of reasoning, in which reason "needs" appetite or spirit to issue in intentional action, would in reality be less genuine manifestations of the *only genuine rational* form.

But there is an alternative. There is a way to argue that even though practical reasoning is subject to incommensurable practical requirements, its different guises can issue in intentional action *qua the object of choice* "on their own" (i.e. not collectively as Korsgaard assumes) without falling back onto Tenenbaum's view (i.e. without discriminating between more and less genuine forms of rationality). To sum up: on Korsgaard's view, there are different forms of

²⁴⁰ For a brilliant illumination of the tension between the ideal of justice and freedom, and the failure of justice to unify the divided soul in the *Republic*, see Foster's awe inspiring book on *The Political Philosophies of Plato and Hegel*. (Foster, 1935)

practical reasoning which share in a *further ideal* form of rationality which they constitute collectively as a unity by performing their proper functions rightly. On Tenenbaum's conception, there are different forms of practical reasoning which share in an ideal form of rationality by virtue of the fact that they approach, more or less perfectly, the only genuine form of practical reasoning – the form of fully deliberative reasoning.

The first step to the alternative argument is to insist that the parts of the soul can all provide both the incentive and the principle, to speak in the Kantian idiom. To avert the first form of misunderstanding, the one that leads to Korsgaard's view, we have to understand reason *as being its own matter*; in Korsgaard's idiom, as also ruling over *itself*. To avert the second form of misunderstanding, the one that leads to Tenenbaum's view, we have to understand appetite as *being its own form*; in Tenenbaum's idiom, as also *determining*, and not merely (accidentally) striving for what is good. To get there we have to appreciate that the incommensurable practical requirements determine incommensurable guises of practical reasoning (determinations of *individual* means-end syntheses by the practical requirements) and not incommensurable forms of reasoning (*ways* in which practical reasoning is determined by practical requirements). The fact that practical reasoning is determined by incommensurable practical requirements does not have to mean that each such requirement determines practical reasoning in a distinctive and incommensurable *way*; i.e. it does not have to mean that each practical requirement determines an incommensurable *form* of practical reasoning, as Tenenbaum and Korsgaard assume. Practical reasoning may still be determined by incommensurable requirements in one and the same way. This is the way of a distinctive self-consciousness, which may, depending on the circumstances, constitute practical knowledge: knowledge of oneself as rightly determining what to do in the circumstances. This is why practical reasoning determined by incommensurable

requirements of practical rationality may nevertheless issue in intentional action qua the object of choice and not merely qua eligible for choice. Let me take things more slowly here.

In the first chapter of this dissertation I argued that we have good reason to accept the Thompsonian account of the elementary structure of intentional action. On this account, the structure of intentional action is the synthesis of instrumental or means-end descriptions (means-end synthesis) which is manifested in rationalizations of the form “I’m doing A because I’m doing B, I’m doing B because I’m doing C, etc.” If the form of action motivation is the form of practical reasoning; and action motivation is subject to non-instrumental incommensurable practical requirements, then we should say that the guises of practical reasoning – i.e. the *(individual) determinations* of means-end synthesis that are inscribed in an action by practical requirements – are themselves incommensurable.

With this generic definition of practical reasoning in mind I can cast Tenenbaum’s and Korsgaard’s views in the following light. For Tenenbaum the incommensurable guises of practical reasoning are more or less perfect approximations to the exercise of the paradigmatic capacity of determining which such guises are the right ones in general; determining that is one’s general conception of the good. For Korsgaard, on the other hand, the incommensurable guises of practical reasoning constitute in the ideal case (which is the case of the ideal arrangement of the parts of the soul) different stages of the ideal activity of reasoning about what is the right means-end synthesis in the circumstances.

In my view, the incommensurable guises of practical reasoning really are incommensurable guises of practical reasoning, which, depending on the circumstances, are all equally practical and rational. Tenenbaum and Korsgaard hesitate to admit this simple truth because both

mistakenly assume that the unapologetic incommensurability (i.e. no less, or more, or equal practicality and rationality) of the (*individual*) *determinations* of practical reasoning by practical requirements has to issue in strongly²⁴¹ incommensurable forms of choice. Tenenbaum's solution was to *partly* embrace this incommensurability of forms of choice,²⁴² and Korsgaard's solution was to *partly* reject it.²⁴³ I believe that we can entirely reject the possibility that there are multiple forms of choice, even in the face of the (*individual*) *determination* of practical reasoning by incommensurable requirements of practical rationality.

Korsgaard and Tenenbaum assume that clear-cut incommensurability between the guises of practical reasoning (its (*individual*) *determinations* by incommensurable practical requirements) must constitute clear-cut incommensurability between forms of practical reasoning which cannot but issue in clear-cut incommensurability between forms of choice. This is why they both assume a watered down incommensurability of the guises of practical reasoning. But there is an alternative. The incommensurable *guises* of practical reasoning (individual (*individual*) *determinations* of practical reasoning by incommensurable practical requirements) need not constitute incommensurable *forms* of practical reasoning (typical ways in which practical reasoning is determined by incommensurable practical requirements). The incommensurability of the guises of practical reasoning is compossible with the existence of a single way in which practical reasoning is determined by practical requirements. Let me explain how.

²⁴¹ Whereas if they posit that the guises of practical reasoning are mildly incommensurable, then they think that they can have recourse to an equally mild incommensurability of forms of choice. But as I showed in the previous subsection this impression is mistaken.

²⁴² I say "partly" because Tenenbaum ultimately admits of a single genuine form of practical reasoning and hence of choice too; the rest he takes to be degenerate or imperfect versions of the genuine form.

²⁴³ I say "partly" here too because Korsgaard ultimately has to treat the ideal case of intentional action as one form of choice and the defective intentional action as another.

The *(individual) determination* of an agent's practical reasoning by incommensurable requirements should not be taken merely as the activity of reasoning under incommensurable standards of what the right means-end synthesis is in the circumstances. We should understand the *(individual) determination* of the agent's reasoning by incommensurable standards of rationality as the agent's consciousness of her reasoning as determined by the right practical requirement for the right means-end synthesis in the circumstances; and so, as consciousness of herself as rightly determining what to do in the circumstances, such that it may constitute knowledge of *herself* as rightly determining what to do in the circumstances, depending on the circumstances. If the determination of practical reasoning is thus self-conscious, we can take the *form* of practical reasoning (the way it is determined by incommensurable practical requirements) to be this distinctive sort *self-consciousness on the part of the agent*. So for instance (intemperate) appetite not only presents an action as pleasant, but it also presents pleasure as the proper requirement by which one's reasoning ought to be determined in the circumstances; and similarly for the other requirements of practical rationality. If we thus understand the *(individual) determination* of practical reasoning by incommensurable practical requirements, and see our way to accepting that there is only a single form of practical reasoning, we can appreciate that choice just is the actualization of this distinctive form when things go well; i.e. practical knowledge. Practical reasoning may issue in intentional action, even when the agent is wrong in her self-consciousness, because intentionality is constituted by the potential of self-consciousness to constitute practical knowledge. When the agent is right in her self-consciousness the agent's intentional action constitutes choice; i.e. practical knowledge. Choice constitutes the simple actualization of the capacity to reason practically or self-consciously, the potential for which constitutes the intentionality of action. We do not have to assume that there

are more or less ideal or rational forms of this capacity, as Korsgaard and Tenenbaum seemed forced to, to explain the difference between intentionality and choice. This is how we manage to both preserve the genuine incommensurability of the *(individual) determinations* of practical reasoning by the requirements of practical rationality and answer the question of choice.

But one may object that the only thing I have thus far managed to settle is that all intentional actions must be self-conscious in a distinctive way; not that this distinctive self-consciousness is the form of the intentionality of action. For, we cannot just assume that intentional action *as the object of choice* is what *multi-dimensional* practical reasoning issues in. For this is what we are trying to show. In other words, even if we manage to establish that the incommensurable guises of practical reasoning are self-conscious *(individual) determinations of what to do under the guise of the (purportedly) right practical requirement for the circumstances*, and that all choice is the self-conscious *(individual) determination* of reasoning under the right practical requirement for the circumstances, what I have not established is that this self-consciousness is not multiform as well. In other words, on this objection, I have not established that the criteria for determining whether an agent is right in the consciousness of herself (as determined in her reasoning by the right practical requirement for the circumstances) are not themselves internal to the standards of the practical requirement which determines the reasoning; and so I have not established that the criteria of practical knowledge are not themselves incommensurable. But, once the possibility of this incommensurability is on the table, we will once more (as in the case of the material multi-dimensional views) need to introduce an *extra* capacity for judging *what is the right form of self-consciousness* about what one ought to do in the circumstances.

The only reason we are tempted into this *further* postulation of incommensurability is that we overlook another simple truth: that the self-consciousness involved in the (*individual*) *determination* of reasoning by requirements of practical rationality is not itself something that can admit of further incommensurable forms, *because when things go well* this self-consciousness simply amounts to practical knowledge; knowledge of oneself as rightly determining what to do.²⁴⁴ There is no need for a *further* criterion for deciding whether this or that particular self-consciousness as reasoning under the right requirement constitutes knowledge, other than how way things in the world go. Self-consciousness of rightness in the sense discussed here does not automatically amount to practical knowledge of rightness. One may be conscious of oneself as reasoning in the right manner in the circumstances without *indeed* doing so. To say that an action counts as intentional to the extent that the agent of the action is conscious of herself as reasoning under the right requirement for the circumstances is not to say that the agent is *indeed* right in her self-consciousness. It is to say though that she is *potentially* right and so that her self-consciousness *potentially* constitutes practical knowledge of herself as correctly determining what to do in the circumstances. It is this potential of self-consciousness to constitute practical knowledge that makes all actions intentional, even though they may issue from incommensurable (*individual*) *determinations* of practical reasoning by practical requirements. Whether the particular guise of self-consciousness (consciousness of oneself as rightly reasoning under the guise of a specific practical requirement) in each situation indeed constitutes practical knowledge or not will depend on the particular circumstances. It is true that there is no way to tell in advance what instance of self-consciousness will indeed be

²⁴⁴ When speaking here of practical knowledge I don't mean to refer to Anscombe's specification of practical knowledge in the first part of *Intention*, as knowledge without observation of what one is doing when one is acting intentionally. (Anscombe, 1957) What the connection of Anscombe's sense of knowledge with my sense of practical knowledge as knowledge of oneself as rightly determining what to do, is a topic of further research.

right in particular circumstances. But as I will briefly suggest in the conclusion of this dissertation, there is no good reason why we should be expect to able to tell in advance anyway. And so no further criterion of the rightness of one's practical self-consciousness is needed other how things in the world go.

In the introduction to this chapter I said that if practical reasoning is determined by incommensurable requirements, the sense in which practical reasoning is reasoning about what *to do* is put in jeopardy. To show this I urged that typically when we reason about what to do, we reason both about *what* the prudent or the pleasant thing is, and about *whether* to do the prudent or the pleasant thing or not. And I suggested that a good theory of practical reasoning should take practical reasoning to address both questions. But if the requirements of rationality by which practical reasoning is determined are incommensurable, then, it may seem that unless we postulate the existence of a higher order or ideal form of practical reasoning, practical reasoning will be about what is the prudent thing to do, or what pleasant thing to do, but *not* about whether to do the pleasant thing or not, for instance.

If I'm right in suggesting that the (*individual*) *determination* of practical reasoning by a principle of rationality involves the agent's consciousness of herself *as determined in her reasoning by the right practical requirement*, then in reasoning about *what* the pleasant thing to do is, one will *thereby* be reasoning about *whether* to do the pleasant thing (and the same goes for prudence, etiquette, or whatever other guise of practical reasoning we propose). For, an agent's reasoning that doing-A-to-do-B is the pleasant thing to do must involve the self-consciousness on her part that the principle she is reasoning under (i.e. pleasure) is the right principle to reason under in the circumstances. Of course, the reasoning may be unsound and the

self-consciousness false. What matters is that in reasoning about what to do, one would on my view be reasoning both about what the particular e.g. “prudent” thing to do in the circumstances is, and about whether reasoning under the guise of prudence is called for by the circumstances or not.

In her book on self-constitution Korsgaard makes the dramatic claim that “our liberation from the government of instinct is also our expulsion from the Garden, our banishment from a world that is teleologically ordered by our instincts and presented as such by our incentives, a world in which we nearly always already know what to do ... For now we must use intelligence and reason both to reconstruct a picture of the world that enables us to find our way around in it, and to decide where to go and what to do in that world. That is to say, we must resort to *science* to reconstruct a usable conception of the world, and to *ethics* to determine how to live our lives.”²⁴⁵

If what I said here is right, then we never actually left the Garden. For we almost always know what to do. It’s just that the Garden was never perfect. For as Korsgaard herself emphasizes in her book, we almost always act.²⁴⁶ To assume that we are not in the Garden is to assume that things never go well, and that self-consciousness in acting never actually amounts to practical knowledge. This is simply absurd. *Intelligence* and *Reason* are not the equivalents of map and compass for someone who is ‘homeless’, in the way that science and ethics may be. To act and to act well we do not need a map and a compass, or science and ethics. We need the right upbringing and the right circumstances. Both of which can be proven inadequate at times of great challenge where nothing we could do could speak to our sense of how we should be

²⁴⁵ Korsgaard, 2009, p. 118-9.

²⁴⁶ “Human beings are condemned to choice and action” (Korsgaard, 2009, p. 1).

acting. Intelligence and reason are not tools for “us,” sinners against the “government of instinct,” but the differentiae of “our” life-form, from which alone we may become alienated.

4. CONCLUSION

In the introduction of this dissertation I tried to motivate the normativist commitment by arguing that only a normativist conception of motivation can allow for the distinctive criticism that *akrasia* incurs. And I suggested that if the conflicting motivations are conceived of as subject to two incommensurable requirements of practical normativity, then the object of each motivation will be criticizable from the standards which constitute the other motivation *as such*. The *akratic* motivation would count as being subject to standards internal to the perspective of action motivation. If what I argued for in this dissertation is right, *akrasia* is an instance of primary motivational conflict. It is an instance of reasoning practically that one and the same action ought to both be pursued and avoided, where each instance is an exercise of reasoning under an incommensurable requirement of practical rationality. So, when I am *akratically* smoking this one cigarette, my action is the outcome of a primary motivational conflict between reasoning practically both that smoking this one cigarette is to be done and that it is to be avoided. Each motivation, i.e. each piece of reasoning is determined by incommensurable practical requirements; let's say appetite and temperance in this case. If the motivations conflict, each piece of reasoning will incur criticism from the perspective of the requirement determining the

conflicting piece of reasoning. In intemperately smoking this one cigarette, I am subject not only to the standards of the requirement of temperance (the requirement to reason practically to what will be prudent) but also the standards of the requirement of appetite (the requirement to reason practically to what will be enjoyable). And these standards are internal to action motivation as such; in fact they constitute action motivation, as I tried to show in this dissertation, because action motivation is determined as such by incommensurable requirements of practical rationality.

But, one will object, this explanation of *akrasia* renders it indistinguishable within the genus of primary motivational conflict. For if the distinctive feature of *akrasia* is *merely* that from the point of view of one motivation the conflicting motivation is not determined under the right guise of reasoning for the circumstances, then *akrasia* will be indistinguishable from all other cases of primary motivational conflict. It will for instance be indistinguishable from continent motivation where one manages to act temperately. For in this case too, the criticism one will incur will arise from the requirement which determines the reasoning which in the circumstances issues in a contrary verdict about what to do. In both cases, that is, the motivation one acts from will merely be subject to the determining standards of the motivation one does not act from. This potential assimilation seems counter-intuitive because it appears that in acting *akratically* I am aware of acting wrongly in a way that I am not aware of when acting continently. This is the objection that *akrasia* is asymmetric, whereas on my account it appears to be symmetric.

But I suggested at the end of the third chapter of this dissertation that the form of practical reasoning – the way it is determined by incommensurable practical requirements – is the distinctive form of self-consciousness: the self-consciousness on the part of the agent as

determined in her reasoning by the right requirement of practical rationality for the circumstances; such that it may constitute practical knowledge depending on the circumstances. So, I can say now that the case of *akrasia* is indeed distinct from other cases of primary motivational opposition, because by definition in this case, the self-consciousness of the reasoning one acts against does constitute practical knowledge in the circumstances. So, I can claim, the asymmetry between the *akratic* and the continent motivation in the case we are discussing is distinguished in accordance with whether the self-consciousness one eventually acts against constitutes practical knowledge or not.²⁴⁷ So, in the case of intemperately smoking this one cigarette, my *akratic* motivation is defective not just from the perspective of the contrary motivation and hence of an incommensurable practical requirement, but from the perspective of the right motivation and hence from the perspective of practical knowledge. Whereas in the case of continently abstaining from smoking this one cigarette, my continent motivation is defective from the perspective not just of the contrary motivation but from the perspective of the mistaken in the circumstances self-consciousness. It is in this way, I believe, that *akrasia* is asymmetric.

Now one may insist that the point of the objection was not to just note the distinctiveness of the *akratic* type of primary motivational conflict, but to challenge directly my conclusion that there are distinct and incommensurable requirements of practical rationality, or guises of action motivation and practical reasoning, which are constituted as such by distinct and incommensurable normative standards, such that when one acts from either of the conflicting motivations one is thereby subject to the standards of the contrary motivation. For if in acting continently one is not aware of acting wrongly in the way that one is aware of acting wrongly

²⁴⁷ This is what Aristotle means when he says that the *akrates* does not act from choice. (*Nicomachean Ethics*, 1148a 18-9)

when acting *akratically*, then this might seem to show that in acting continently one is not flouting any distinct and incommensurable rational norms; i.e. one is not acting wrongly even from the *misguided* application of the standards of the incommensurable guise of practical reasoning as I would like to say. This purported difference in self-consciousness might, in our case, be taken to show that appetite is not constituted by its own practical requirement, by reference to which one can be criticized as acting wrongly. But the proposed phenomenological evidence does not point this way at all. That I'm conscious of acting wrongly in a different way when I'm acting *akratically* than when I am acting continently, follows from the fact that the self-consciousness of the rightness that each guise of reasoning or motivation involves is indeed distinct. If the standards of acting rightly are different in each case (i.e. issue from a different requirement of practical rationality), then when I'm acting wrongly in each case, it follows that I will be conscious of a different sort of wrongness on my part. In the case of wrongness by the standards of prudence for instance I could be conscious of fighting my own development and well-being in time, etc., whereas in the case of wrong doing by the standards of appetite I could be conscious of failing to live an open-minded life such that it is guided not only by map and compass but also by delight and enjoyment.

And yet, the objector will press, when acting incontinently I'm conscious of the wrongness of the act not just *from a certain perspective*, but *as such*. And this just isn't what I'm conscious of when acting continently for instance. So, the objector might continue, it is only in the *akratic* case that I'm conscious of *real* wrongness. In the continent case I'm at best conscious of some incongruity or disagreement and this may be normative but not deeply so. But this is to illegitimately divide kinds of wrongness into genuine and less genuine out of mere prejudice. The prejudice is I think the result of the notion that if erring on the side of caution is preferable

to erring on the side of pleasure, as Aristotle recommends, then the latter erring is more genuine than the former, and so the standards of prudence are superior to the standards of appetite by default. The only reason that Aristotle recommends that erring on the side of caution is preferable is statistical. Since most people err on the side of prudence, and since the matters of human conduct are uncertain and unpredictable,²⁴⁸ then it is better to err on this side. The thought is not that since it matters most to err on the side of prudence, then we should be avoiding it as much as possible. The thought is that the side of caution is the side of prudence because most people fail by its standards more often than by other standards.

Should I not have a story about what explains the sense that the wrong-doing in the *akratic* case is, so to speak, graver than in the case of merely continent wrong-doing? The fact that self-consciousness may take incommensurable guises does not mean that in each such guise it cannot come in degrees. So for instance in cases of what we call *clear-eyed akrasia*, the agent's consciousness of herself as rightly determined in her reasoning under the requirement of prudence in the circumstances is stronger than in common occurrences of *akrasia*. Conversely, in a lot of cases of continent conflict, the agent's consciousness of herself as rightly determined in reasoning appetitively (say in thinking that one piece of super fatty chocolate cake will not harm the tenth attempt at a diet of someone who can't keep their mouth shut) may be relatively weak. There is nothing in what I've said so far that precludes this possibility.

²⁴⁸ See Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*. I quote David Wiggins' translation of an excerpt from chapter ten from Book Five of the *Nicomachean Ethics*: "About some things it is not possible to make a general statement which shall be correct. In those cases then in which it is necessary to speak generally but not possible to do so correctly, the law takes the usual case, though it is not ignorant of the possibility of error. And it is not wrong to do so: for the shortcoming is not in the law nor in the lawgiver but in the nature of the thing, since the subject matter of the practical is like this from the outset. About some things it is impossible to lay down a law, so that a particular decree is needed. For when the thing is indefinite, the rule is also indefinite, like the leaden rule used in making the Lesbian moulding: the rule adapts to the shape of the stone and is not rigid. So too a decree adapts itself to the particular facts." (Wiggins, 1997). I will come back to this notion of uncertainty in the human affairs shortly.

I said above that Aristotle's urge that we should be erring on the side of prudence is motivated by his estimation that most people err on the side of prudence and his belief that the matters of human conduct are uncertain and unpredictable. To end this dissertation I want to come to this last part of Aristotle's injunction, and explain why, if what I've said so far is right, we too should draw nearer to this commonsensical Aristotelian claim.

In the final chapter of this dissertation I discussed Korsgaard's view as an attempt to ground the distinctness of the guises of practical reasoning in something other than their approximation to a more *genuine* or *rational* form of reasoning, as Tenenbaum's view seemed committed to. And I argued that ultimately Korsgaard's conception is also committed to the idea that there are distinct forms of unity of intentional action, which are distinguished as such in accordance with whether they approximate the most *genuine* or *rational* form of unity: the unity which is the outcome of the perfect collective exercise of the function of each of the soul's parts, and is determined by the "right" law of reason and not the "wrong" law of appetite. In Korsgaard's view then, we can determine ahead of time which forms of practical reasoning are right in the circumstances, independently of the circumstances; i.e. the ones united by the "right" law of reason and not the "wrong" law of appetite. Tragedy on this view arises when we unite ourselves genuinely, i.e. when each part of the soul performs its own function excellently and in accordance with the right law, but the circumstances in the world are such that even our best grapes go sour.

Against this conception of our practical situation in the world I suggested that there is only one form of practical reasoning and this is the self-consciousness of the agent as determined in her reasoning by the right requirement of practical rationality for the circumstances. And I

claimed that what makes all action determined by incommensurable practical requirements intentional is that this self-consciousness is a potential form of practical knowledge; when things go well this self-consciousness constitutes practical knowledge.

One consequence of this view is that we cannot determine in advance of reasoning and acting which practical requirement is the most genuine, and so what our most common or mundane guises of reasoning ought to attempt to approximate. For it is the mark of all requirements of practical rationality that they are all equally genuine, since each and every one of them may potentially issue in practical knowledge, when things go well. We cannot fully determine in advance which practical requirement will work best for what circumstances, i.e. which requirement of rationality will determine the guise of practical reasoning which will constitute practical knowledge in particular circumstances, because we cannot determine in advance whether things will go well or not.

But if we cannot determine in advance under what circumstances a specific *guise* of practical self-consciousness (self-consciousness of the agent that the specific requirement she is reasoning under is the right requirement for the circumstances) will constitute practical knowledge, then we cannot come up with a coherent and functional map of our practical situation in the world and a full-fledged plan of what self to be and what life to live, as Korsgaard seems to suppose. As David Wiggins puts it, "...often in a given case, we *can* find a way to collate and arbitrate between the demands that impinge there of impartiality, benevolence, mercy, due process, and so on. There may, however, be no general method for doing this. And let us say that A is incommensurable with B in the new sense of "incommensurable" – and under the new understanding of what sorts of things A and B are – if

there is no *general* way in which A and B trade off in the whole range of situations of choice and comparison in which they figure.”²⁴⁹ There arises out of this line of thought a new way of understanding incommensurability, on which two guises of practical reasoning in my terminology, or “general concerns which are rooted in the multiplicity of psychic structures” in Wiggins’ terminology,²⁵⁰ are incommensurable in the sense that *there is no general method of determining which of them will constitute practical knowledge in particular circumstances.*

But if it is not possible to construct in advance a detailed map and compass for our practical journey in the world, the following non-philosophical, practical question arises: How then, facing the claims that these incommensurable general concerns or practical requirements make on us, do we make our choices? Or rather, how do we make our choices in the light of our consciousness of the incommensurability of our most general concerns in this last sense of incommensurability? In other words, how do we go about in the world of practice if not with map (telling us where the good is located) and compass (telling us where we are located in relation to the good) in hand? As Wiggins characteristically puts it “The answer is that we have to make our choice in the light of our overall *practical* conception of how to be or how to live a life (both here and in general). We deploy these conceptions even as the variety of the contingencies that we actually confront constantly shapes or reshapes the conceptions themselves (a two-way flow). It will be no wonder if choice (as now described) is the exercise of an irreducibly practical knowledge, a knowledge that can never be exhaustively transposed into any finite set of objectives that admit of finite expression.”²⁵¹

²⁴⁹ Wiggins, 1997, p. 58-9.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

We choose in the light of our practical conception of how to be or live, which is neither determined prior to the circumstances nor unchanging. Instead it is a conception which is constantly reshaped by the contingent situations and our response to them, and not in accordance with a definite law which is antecedently determined as good, based on what form of practical reasoning provides it, as per Korsgaard's view. In the light of this dynamic and historically determined conception of how to be and live we commonly reach accommodations between the autonomous, separate and irreducible practical requirements we are under. But as Wiggins notes "...there cannot be any guarantee that no matter what the circumstances may be, we shall always be able to find this accommodation...Where our concerns for A, B (which are incommensurable simply in the third sense) cannot in a given circumstance X be accommodated at all to our sense of how one should live and what one should do, where *nothing* seems to us, even for the context, bearable or livable, there A and B are also in a fourth and "tragic" sense incommensurable in X – or incommensurable for us in X."²⁵²

In my terminology, the incommensurability of the requirements which determine practical reasoning (in the sense that there is no general method of determining in advance under what conditions the self-consciousness of the agent as being determined in her reasoning by the right requirement for the circumstances will constitute practical knowledge) leaves it open that none of them may actually constitute practical knowledge in some circumstances. For it is always open that particular circumstances in the world are such that the incommensurable practical requirements to which our thinking is subject cannot actually trade off each other in such a way as to yield a correct determination of oneself as knowing what one ought to do. For it is open, in

²⁵² Wiggins, *ibid.*, p. 64.

other words, that there are cases in which the alternatives with which we are faced cannot be accommodated at all to our sense of how we should live.²⁵³

The avoidance of this sort of tragedy, where nothing we do can amount to a rational response to circumstances in the world, is I believe the deeper reason which motivates theorists to seek either a theory of commensurable requirements of practical rationality in the way presented in the second chapter of this dissertation, or a theory of incommensurable but *a priori* more genuine or more rational forms of rational motivation in the ways examined in the final chapter. That my view does not avoid the possibility of this sort of tragedy is not a fault of the view, but a reflection of our practical condition in the world. In fact, I believe that views which cannot allow for this sort of tragedy are the views which are built on a fantasy about our practical condition.

It transpired over the course of the argument of this dissertation that the different families of normativist multi-dimensional views typically resort to the following types of incommensurability: (a) The Motivation-first versions of multi-dimensionalism had to resort to a version of incommensurability on which the intervening dispositions to which a given disposition has to approximate to count as a case of action motivation could not be measured exactly against each other by a measure M of property ϕ ; where property ϕ was taken to be the approximation to a specific agent-general disposition. (b) The Reasons-first multi-dimensionalist theories had to resort to a type of incommensurability on which the respects of reason-hood that figure in the content of the judgment one has to be motivated in accordance with in order to count as motivated to act are incommensurable in the sense that they constitute

²⁵³ For a fascinating explication of this “tragic” sense of incommensurability, see Lear 2006.

respects of practical worth-whileness that cannot be compared in respect of reason-hood. c) The Reasoning-first versions of multi-dimensionalism had to posit a conception of incommensurability on which the reasoning one has to be engaged in to count as being motivated to act must itself take incommensurable forms; i.e. that the way in which practical reasoning is determined by the incommensurable practical requirements must itself be incommensurable; and so the only way to judge whether it will be appropriate or not in the circumstances would be to judge whether it is *a priori* genuine or not.

But these conceptions of incommensurability are ultimately unappealing. For on all of them, it is still possible to construct a general method for figuring out how the incommensurable concerns A and B trade off in the whole range of situations of choice that an agent may face in her life. For in the first case, it might be true that there is no measure against which to exactly measure the realization of property ϕ in A and B, but this does not mean that A and B are nevertheless not comparable. If they are comparable, it should be perfectly plausible to come up with a general method of comparing different alternatives in terms of reason-hood. Similarly in the second case it might be true that A and B may be incomparable with respect to reason-hood, but this does not mean that there should be no way to choose between them; such as would enable an adequate researcher to predict or explain in advance all reasonable behavior. As Joseph Raz himself puts it when he attempts to defend the sense of incommensurability as incomparability in terms of reason-hood, "Saying that two options are incommensurate does not preclude choice. Rational action is action for (what the agent takes to be) an undefeated reason. It is not necessarily action for a reason which defeats all others. We are, it is essential to remember, inquiring into the structure of practical reasoning, i.e. of the ways people conceive of themselves and their options and judge them. *Psychological or other theories may explain, even*

*predict, people's choices on some of the occasions in which they find their options to be incommensurate. This is compatible with wide-spread incommensurability. While the agent's reasoning figures in many explanations of behavior there are other factors which also play a part.*²⁵⁴ [my emphasis]

If this is granted, then it should be perfectly plausible to come up with a general method of predicting not only what we have reason to do but also what we will in fact do. Finally, in the third case, it might be true that A and B may be incommensurable in the sense that they themselves determine separate and irreducible standards of what it is to incur a rational loss or gain. But even so, this does not mean that it cannot be determined in advance how A and B will trade off each other (i.e. with what losses on the part of the agent) in the whole range of choices an agent faces. In other words, an agent can determine in advance what *types* of rational losses and gains to acquire. In this case it should be perfectly plausible to construct a general method for engaging practically with the world.

The distinctive sense of incommensurability of A and B is the sense I suggested above, in which, as Wiggins puts it, “there is no *general* way in which A and B trade off in the whole range of situations of choice and comparison in which they figure.”²⁵⁵ The courage that our practical situation in the world demands is not the courage of the one who knows in advance that some choices will necessarily involve a distinctive type of rational loss or pain, as in the last sense of incommensurability above. The courage that our practical situation in the world demands is the courage of the agents who know that they have to make “the best sense they can of their own positive concerns and commitments in the space not excluded by accepted

²⁵⁴ Raz, 1985-6, p. 132-133.

²⁵⁵ Wiggins, 1997, p. 59.

prohibitions and of their striving to do this even in a world for whose countless and not exhaustively classifiable contingencies no Decalogue or code of practice or statement of objectives could ever prepare them.”²⁵⁶

If this is our practical condition, then, to end with a final quote by David Wiggins, “It follows that the standard of reasonable conduct that the philosophy of the practical derives from lived experience must attend to each value in its separateness and irreducibility to others. It must specify more and more closely what claims (including moral claims) each value makes on thought, feeling, and appetite. The philosopher of practice must render it as unmysterious as he can how the knowledge of such a standard is not exhausted by the verbalized generalizations or precepts of either agent or theorist. It is the existence of such knowledge that makes it possible, as Aristotle puts it, for the decision to lie in perception, that is, for the decision to depend on the exercise of judgment in confrontation with some actually given particular situation, even as the situation itself (with its larger context) is as specifically conceived by the agent as is necessary for him to conceive it in order to realize or instantiate there his evolving conception of the life that it is for him to lead in the there and then.”²⁵⁷ But this is the task of another work.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

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